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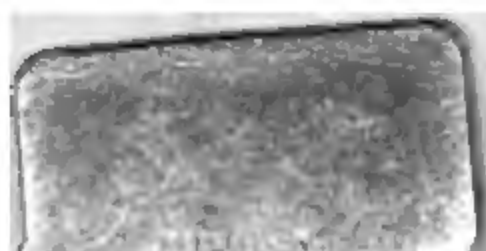
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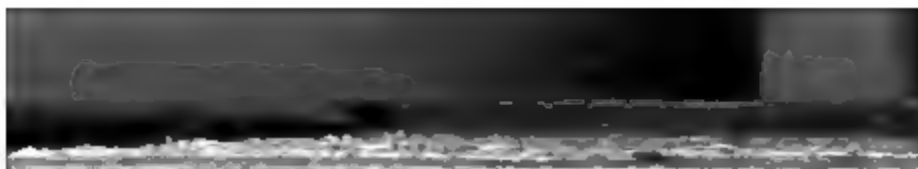
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Mercy Manifested to a Chief Sinner;

OR,

AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND LETTERS

OF THE LATE

EDWARD BLACKSTOCK,

DURING THIRTY YEARS

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT POTTON, WOLVERHAMPTON, &c.

GOWER STREET, LONDON,

AND FINALLY AT SALEM CHAPEL, FITZROY SQUARE.

“The blessings shall be on the head of him that was
SEPARATE from his brethren.”—*Gen. xlix. 26.*

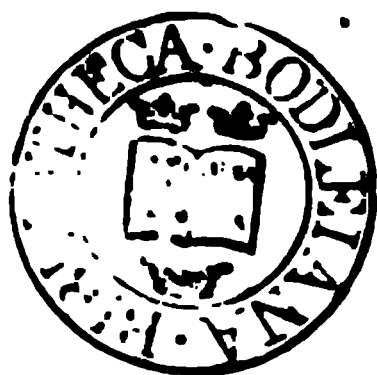
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NOT In consequence of the space required for the Letters which friends had kindly sent, it has been found necessary to withdraw several, but it is purposed to publish them hereafter, together with a few Hymns of the late Mr. Blackstock.



PREFATORY SKETCH.

THE following particulars of the life and dealings of God with the late Mr. Blackstock, were written by himself, and left by him for publication in the hope, as expressed in his Preface, that praise would redound to the glory of God, and benefit accrue to the Church of Christ.

This Autobiography is now laid before the public in the full conviction, that it will not only be acceptable to the general mass of Christian readers, but be highly prized by the Lord's living family.

Mr. Blackstock's conversion being so remarkable and his life so specially under the directing hand of Providence, renders it one of the most striking, yet, blessed be God, not solitary instances of the power of Jehovah in arresting an avowed infidel in the midst of his enmity and rebellion. And although he was not suffered, like Mr. Newton and Colonel Gardiner, to fall into external and gross acts of sin, yet as his infidelity was more matured and fixed than theirs, so the grace of God as exhibited in his conversion is alike sovereign and conspicuous.

The narrative is a simple and naked record of the Lord's dealings with himself, both in his ministerial and private capacity. He has avoided entering upon those subjects of general interest which please the ordinary readers of biography, and he has abstained from exciting the natural feelings by appealing to our sympathies. It appears throughout the narrative to have been his leading desire that God—and not man, should have the pre-eminence.

The Christian reader will be struck with the honest faithfulness with which this servant of the Lord has recorded his own heart sins and infirmities, and delivered judgment against them. He places himself before us as the Scriptures portray the saints of old, with no reservations and no palliation. (How different from much of the modern delineation, where the bright side is highly coloured, and the opposite cast into obscurity!)

It is greatly to be regretted that the Memoir was not continued to a later period, but many and sorrowful causes combined to render that undertaking painful and difficult. The hiatus has been supplied as far as possible, by extracts from letters and other authentic documents; and as Mr. Blackstock left behind him a mass of correspondence, extending over a period of upwards of thirty years, the task, though a tedious, could not be a difficult one. The friends of the late Mr. Blackstock have kindly furnished letters of his on various subjects. It is thought they will enrich the Memoir, and be precious to the Lord's tried family. A selection from those of his late excellent wife will

be read with much interest. The Lord, who knew the path of trial through which his servant was destined to go, had graciously given him in Mrs. Blackstock, a true helpmeet—a most devoted and loving wife.

She was a woman of much weight of character and energy of mind, an excellent mother and a blessedly taught Christian. Her memory is sacredly revered by her children; and she is remembered with genuine regard and esteem by the friends to whom she was known.

Her letters exhibit more faithfully than any biographer could do, the servant of God in the family circle, where character and temper are best tested.

Under all the varying circumstances through which they had to pass, straits, difficulties, privations, illnesses, deaths, a large family to maintain, with scanty, and humanly speaking precarious means, they struggled on together encouraging and supporting each other. They were both made and kept, by the favour of God, conscientiously honest. "Owe no man anything," was an injunction of much weight with them, and one which led them to the practise of rigid self-denial. But the narrative will unfold *that secret*, whence sprung those fruits of "whatsoever was lovely or of good report." The children relate now, with feelings of emotion, how their venerated parents on all special occasions of trial or difficulty—as well as on those of deliverances or mercies—were in the habit of retiring together for secret prayer, or of gathering their children around them, and there pouring out their hearts before God. To this source may be

traced those qualities which endeared this servant of God to his family and friends; and from this source arose that needful power to act and stand alone, under circumstances which called for independence, when a disposition naturally cleaving, would have inclined him to lean upon a brother.

Mr. Blackstock was a man of plain simple habits, of unassuming quiet manners, and of natural refinement and delicacy of feeling. He was possessed of sound judgment, and had a remarkable portion of common sense. He was very reflective and cautious in forming or giving an opinion; and was in the habit of weighing well what he advanced. There was a natural vein of humour in his character, but grace restrained it; and the severe trials through which he had passed, had given to his mind and deportment a subdued and chastened tone.

His countenance was placid and serene, with a look of patient endurance, and his whole bearing was that of an unassuming character, full of kindly feeling and sympathy. He was tall and fair, with good features and a full blue expressive eye. Altogether he bespoke your confidence, and commanded your respect.

The death of his wife (which took place in October, 1842,) was a most severe bereavement. She was a companion eminently fitted to cheer, sustain and comfort a minister of God in his varied trials; but the Lord saw it good to send this additional stroke, that his servant might be able, from personal experience, to comfort those in like affliction. The event occurred at a period when such a companion appeared more

than ever needed ; trials which had been accumulating now seemed to threaten overthrow. But she was “ taken from the *evil to come*.”

Where a life has been signally marked by Divine favour, and blessed with many and striking manifestations of the Lord’s gracious presence, we generally find that corresponding trials are allotted. It was so with the Bible saints of old, and it has been so with thousands of those subsequent blessed ones “ of whom the world was not worthy.” The trials which this servant of God in his latter days was called to pass through, were of that severe and special nature pointed to by the inspired Apostle, 1 Peter iv. 12,—“ Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.”

The natural disposition of Mr. Blackstock was highly sensitive and affectionate, his heart was in the welfare of Zion, and he loved his brethren as fellow labourers in the same holy cause. But, from a difference of opinion arising on a question of Church order and fellowship, an estrangement took place which unhappily caused a separation between him and them. This separation, which eventually amounted to alienation on their part, was a most severe trial to the affectionate nature and peace-loving disposition of the outcast brother.

But, it is an evil day! Satan appears to have increasing power, and to be steadily on the watch to spread his gins before the unwary feet of the Lord’s people. Some of these snares, which were laid with

consummate skill, seem to have escaped the observation of even good and favoured men—they fell into them; and, hurried on by the impetuosity of fallen nature, and the natural tendency of the exclusive principles which they maintained, they soon, alas, reached the unholy point of calumny and persecution!

It was now that the "*fiery trial*" appeared to our suffering brother, "as though some *strange* thing happened" unto him. That brethren in the ministry, those whom he had loved and esteemed, should be the instigators of this cruel oppression, was that, which so specially embittered the trial. Yet, to those who have fairly examined the principle of what is termed, strict communion, this circumstance is less a matter of surprise than of regret. Exclusiveness (in minor points) necessarily tends to persecution. The principles of the strict Baptist contain the very germ of that bitter root, whence springs the persecuting spirit of popery! *There* is the assumption of infallibility!—*there* is the lordship over conscience!

The principle which condemns a brother, because he cannot see eye to eye with him on immersion, and which excludes him from the Lord's table, (though acknowledging him as a regenerated soul, a member of Christ's mystical body,) *is* essentially antichristian and intolerant!

Power is a dangerous thing in the hands of fallen man; and power of an ecclesiastical kind, both history and experience prove to be specially so. Our departed brother, alas, had too much cause to feel this, for to such a height did the unhallowed flame burn that it

nearly consumed him ! A confederacy, (which, as he expressed it, was formed to hunt a “withered leaf,”) succeeded in blighting his usefulness, by marring his ministerial reputation and defaming his character. Such are the natural fruits of those principles when pushed to their extreme point.

That blessed man of God, John Bunyan, complains of this very spirit, which was the cause of much suffering to him also. But it is an evil day when there is a rending of the body of Christ ; when the symbol is mistaken for the thing signified, and the shadow for the substance ; when minor differences divide the house of God, and weightier matters are lightly esteemed.

There appears at this time to be a withholding of those sacred influences which keep alive the love of God in the soul ; and but little seems to be felt of that holy anointing oil which causes brotherly love and union. In the absence of these living streams, we are prone to resort to external observances,—to “broken cisterns which can hold no (living) water.”

And, may it not be a question for weighty consideration in this day, when the adversary is watchful, the world ensnaring, and the living streams low, whether we are not unconsciously *quenching* the Spirit, by giving prominence to an external rite, while we are less zealous and earnest for those sacred outpourings of the Holy Ghost ; that holy *Baptism* of the *Spirit* which raises us out of the dust of earth and self, unto Jesus, and gives divine peace, brotherly love and unity ?

This holy Baptism of the Spirit was that which our departed brother and faithful witness for God, most sacredly prized. The "fiery trial" seemed only to increase his ardent longings for it. That these desires were graciously accorded was evident, for patience seemed to have her "perfect work," and charity—which had been severely tested—was able to "endure all things;" he had also learnt to "add to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, charity."

In secret, the servant of God mourned before the Lord, over the rending of Zion; but in the pulpit he rarely alluded to his own personal participations in her sufferings, nor can any instance be recalled of his ever mentioning those trials which told so evidently upon the outward man, and which might truly be called, persecution. He seldom entered upon such subjects, even with his most confidential friends. In reviewing the dealings of God towards himself, he justified them throughout, saying, that he "had not had one trial too many, or too severe; that the furnace was needed to consume the dross."

He retained his kindly feelings towards the brethren, notwithstanding their opposition, and would often say that nothing could break that union which subsisted between him and a brother in the Lord; that they were one in Christ Jesus, and should be eternally one in him; and that when they dropped the clay, they should drop their sins and infirmities. He spent the greater portion of his time alone; he studied the Scriptures much and carefully; and was led by the

teaching of the Spirit, to set the character of the blessed Redeemer before him, as an example which he much desired to follow.

Respecting the ministry, Mr. Blackstock felt the solemn weight and responsibility of his office, but being fully persuaded that he had been called by the Holy Ghost to that sacred post, he was enabled throughout the whole course of his ministerial labours, to commit himself and his work to his divine Master; and to the closing hour of his life, he was never allowed to question the reality of that call, nor to doubt that he had been "anointed" as a witness for God. The passage of Scripture which was applied to his soul with divine power, appeared to contain in it the substance of his sacred commission, Luke iv. 18, 19.

In reading the life of this servant of God, it is impossible not to be struck with the singular and unusually severe nature of the discipline through which he had to pass. We find him in early childhood mourning the death of a tender and beloved mother; during seven years enduring hard and cruel treatment, afterwards suffering poverty, privations and disappointments; and finally, when awakened by the power of God to a sense of his lost condition, passing through varied and long continued severe spiritual conflicts. Such discipline was well calculated to render the subject of it, a fitting instrument to "preach the Gospel to the poor"—the broken hearted—the captive—the blind, the bruised.

In temporal circumstances he had indeed gone

down into the depths of the tried family; and in soul exercises, in conflicts with the enemy, and in the knowledge of fallen nature, few men had been more keenly tried, or more deeply taught

On the other hand, it may be truly said, that during the period of his labours, few ministers (of this day) enjoyed a larger measure of sacred communion with the Lord, or were favoured to receive more of the gracious visits of Emmanuel.

Mr. Blackstock's testimony was considered to be solid, searching and weighty; and it was usually remarked, that even when the sacred dew did not, in individual cases, fall upon the word, there was always much *instruction* conveyed.

He avoided and condemned all fanciful or incautious interpretations of Scripture; he was therefore a safe, as well as a sound teacher. The deep and varied nature of his experience, rendered his ministry more or less suited to the peculiar cases of the Lord's family. But, although he laid the axe effectually to the root of *natural religion*, perhaps few ministers were led to deal more gently with the lambs of Christ's fold; he descended to the lowest evidence, "and was very careful" (to use his own words) "never to cut at the *life*."

Aged and experienced believers found his ministry confirming and establishing. His office appears to have been emphatically that of Joshua's, to lead the tribes into *Rest*.

That the Lord accompanied his labours with a

great blessing, is attested by many living as well as departed witnesses. In a mass of correspondence—during a period of thirty years—there are numerous and striking testimonies to the value of his labours, expressed in terms of deep gratitude and affection. And it is believed that there will be found not a few scattered ones, to whom the memory of the just is blessed, and who will not read the Memoirs of our departed brother, without feelings of interest and emotion.

ED.

[REDACTED]



PREFACE.

BY MR. BLACKSTOCK.

IT has been the delight of the children of God, from ancient times, to make known to their fellow-saints his gracious dealings with them. Their faithful accounts show the footsteps of the flock. Moses declares the work of God upon his own soul, and largely rehearses the righteous acts of the Lord towards his ancient people the Jews. David, the man after God's own heart, lays aside his crown, robe, and sceptre, and steps from his throne in Hebron to the gates of Zion ; thence, addressing all the Lord's people in every future age, high and low, rich and poor together, he uses those most sweet and ever memorable words—“Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.” I have often thought my time well spent in reading the experience of the godly, and have most enjoyed *their* testimony who were safely arrived in glory.

I sensibly feel that I am a poor, reproached, despised, and unworthy instrument, yet I cannot well refrain from casting this mite into the treasury, to the glory

of my Redeemer, that I may not be like the nine lepers who returned not to give God thanks.

I seriously commit this work into the hands of him, who can bless whatever, whomsoever, and wheresoever he pleases. I desire of God wisdom, discretion, light, and faithfulness; and that he may guide my heart, and my hand, to tell nothing but the truth for his praise and for the good of Zion.

All that I am, and have, are his, who has dearly bought me; and to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, be all the glory!

Under God, I address this work to all who in sincerity and truth, love our Lord Jesus Christ, not leaving out God's hidden ones, earnestly wishing them abundance of grace, mercy, love, and peace, from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, that their souls may be in health and prosper.

EDWARD BLACKSTOCK.



MERCY MANIFESTED,

&c.

CHAPTER I.

**BIRTH AND INFANCY—PARENTS—MOTHER'S TRAINING—HER DEATH—
HIS FATHER'S SECOND MARRIAGE—THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS—
THE SON'S APPRENTICESHIP—ILL-TREATMENT—EVIL ASSOCIATES—
EXCITE A SPIRIT OF SPECULATIVE ENQUIRY—ABANDONS THE DOC-
TRINES OF GRACE—IMBIBES ARMINIANISM—ATHEISM—DEISM.**

THE name of my father was Samuel Blackstock. He was a native of Scotland, born near Dumfries in 1752. When a young man, he and his youngest brother removed to Halifax, in Yorkshire. He married Elizabeth Ogden, of Denholme, Bradford. After their marriage my parents went to reside at Manchester, where my father became a master cotton-spinner,—that trade was then in its infancy. The two younger children died early; I was the third son, and born May 20th, 1791, at Oldham Road, Manchester.

My father was a Presbyterian, and had me baptized after their manner. They attended the ministry of Dr. Jack, of the Scotch Chapel in Lloyd-street, until his decease.

I hope that both my parents were possessed of the grace of God. I used to think my father very strict, and rather austere in his manner towards me, but he was a good father and meant well; he set me a good example, took me to chapel as soon as I could walk there, gave me good advice, and did not spare the rod to spoil the child. Whilst under his roof he never suffered me to use improper language, to play in the streets, or to associate with evil company.

My mother was an excellent mother, kind, tender, affectionate, and gentle to me. She gave me the best advice, and as far as lay in her power restrained me from all evil. I was early taught Watts's Hymns for Children, and the Assembly's Catechism. She made me read the Word of God to her frequently, and would question me on what I had read, explaining its meaning in a most serious manner, and commenting on the lot of the righteous and the wicked with great solemnity. She told me I was a sinner and needed a Saviour. Her conversations often affected me, especially when she entered upon the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, and told of his kindness to many children whom she had personally known. Young Josiah and Timothy were often dwelt upon by her, together with other scripture characters; my dear mother hoping by such means as these instrumentally to allure me into the paths of wisdom, and to deter me from the pursuit of evil. Her influence over me was sufficiently powerful to alarm my natural conscience, and to awaken those feelings of apprehension and anxiety which are so often mistaken for the work of the Spirit.

I remember, between seven and eight years of age, when there was a rumour of the French invasion, these fears prevailing to such an extent that I used to pass many disturbed nights, terrified by the thoughts of death and of judgment; the slightest appearance of any attack of illness, or the tidings of the death of a neighbour, were sufficient to excite in me the most dreadful terrors; but these were purely natural convictions, there was nothing spiritual in them, there was no divine change whatever wrought in my soul at that period. My parents, however, thought otherwise; they had observed a change in my conduct and feelings, and mistaking natural pliability of character, and the effect of human argument and persuasion, for

divine influence, they looked forward with satisfaction and pleasure to my eventually becoming a Minister of the Gospel, and laid plans for carrying out these views. My father was then in prosperous circumstances, and expected like many around him who had commenced business under less favourable auspices, to rise in the world and to become affluent. I often overheard him discussing with my mother their plans for my education, and heard him express his intention of sending me in due time to the University of Edinburgh for the completion of my ministerial studies.

About my ninth year, my dear mother was seized with a violent attack of fever and suddenly carried off. Her death was a strange shock to me! I was unable to comprehend it; and could not be brought to believe that I should no more see her. I looked everywhere for her. I remember, long after she was buried, when sent of an errand, that I used to run like one frantic from street to street, hoping to find her, and crying as if my heart would break when she was nowhere to be found. Her death was to me the beginning of sorrows; I loved her dearly, and up to the moment of my writing this, I cannot think of her but with strong emotion. Her loss, both to my sisters and to myself, was unspeakably great.

My father shortly after married again. His second wife was much his junior, and inferior to him in every respect: she was a widow with a young family and treated her own children with great partiality, while we were harshly used and made to feel her severity. To me she was the instrument which God had ordained to alter the purposes which my parents had had in view for my future prospects, and was the procuring cause of much of my bitter suffering and misery.

My father's marriage displeased all his friends, and it seemed to stand in the way of his advancement, for he never prospered after it. And it was a singular

thing that, although both my father and mother were personally unacquainted with this individual, my dear mother pointed her out as the person who would fill her place ; and she actually predicted many events precisely as they afterwards occurred. My mother had then a strong impression that her own death would shortly take place : this impression, unhappily for us, was too soon verified !

Between the period from the death of my mother and the second marriage of my father, an aunt (sister of my mother, married to a Mr. Whitley, of Bingley, in Yorkshire,) invited me to join their family. Her husband was a very kind, feeling man, and from the first undertook to receive me as one of his own family, to educate me with his own sons, to procure employment for me when properly qualified, and to further my prospects in life. Mr. Whitley being in prosperous circumstances and appearing so favourably disposed towards me, I felt extremely grateful for his kindness, and began to hope that a gleam of providential sunshine was about to fall upon me. But, alas, my happiness was of short duration ! before seven months were over my aunt became jealous of her husband's friendly feelings towards the young stranger, and apprehensive lest I should reap advantages which she wished to be confined exclusively to her own children. I perceived that her manner was changed towards me, and I often had the mortification to overhear her urging my uncle to send me back home. The second marriage of my father afforded an occasion for strengthening her cause ; and although her kind husband resisted her arguments for a long while, she finally prevailed by unceasing perseverance, and he most reluctantly yielded in the end to her request, and I was sent home.

My uncle was of the Independent persuasion, a generous and a most friendly man ; he was like a father

to me ; I loved him much, and many a secret tear did I shed in grateful memory of his kindness. "The righteous perisheth and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." Isa. lvii. 1.

On my return home I was sent to school, and when about eleven years of age I obtained employment in a warehouse, and was afterwards removed to a second, where my salary was higher, with the promise of increase.

I now seemed in a fair way of advancing in the world, and I confidently expected to make my way with credit and benefit to myself, and I hoped that Providence was once more smiling upon my path. But again disappointment followed.

My step-mother, anxious to have me removed from the paternal roof, employed every argument with my father, until she finally succeeded in persuading him to apprentice me to a trade. By this extraordinary step, which greatly astonished all our friends, I was taken from a line of business which I greatly liked, and in which there seemed a certain prospect of success, and for which moreover I was considered specially qualified, and bound in my fifteenth year to a man of whose character and habits of life my father knew nothing ; his wife alone was aware of the kind of man into whose hands I was being committed. My father was the dupe of her artifices, and I became (as I considered) the unhappy victim of her misrepresentations. The decision was a dreadful blow to me ; I was grievously distressed and mortified, but there was no escape.

On the 9th September, 1805, a day never to be erased from my memory, I entered the dwelling of Mr. — ; there were three in-door apprentices besides myself, all strangers to me. Mr. — I soon found

to be a most tyrannical and cruel master; he was of republican principles, an infidel, an awful swearer, a bold blasphemer, and a drinking man. During the whole period of my apprenticeship I worked sixteen hours daily, both summer and winter: no rest was allowed us through the day but what was necessary for swallowing our meals. Here I felt the weight of the libertine's arm, and was almost crushed beneath it. My three companions had not been brought up as I had, I therefore seemed to live as in the suburbs of hell!

Nothing that I could do seemed to satisfy or please my tyrannical master, and although from the first I worked very diligently, (after a few months gaining for him by my labour thirty shillings, and latterly three guineas a-week) he would for the slightest fault or failure beat me unmercifully, tear the hair off my head, and kick me until my body was discoloured with bruises. His hard words and offensive epithets were still more galling; yet I can now look back upon that period and solemnly assert, that I was to him a good and faithful apprentice.

The inhuman conduct of this man and his wife, for she was little better in her treatment of the apprentices, as far as respected abusive language, almost broke my heart. My mind was naturally sensitive, and I suffered what I can never describe, in that worse than Egyptian bondage. At times I was driven to meditate self-destruction, and one day feeling my condition to be hopeless, and beyond further possibility of endurance, I hastened to a canal near the place, fully determined to put an end to my miserable existence; but when I reached the spot, the thoughts of eternity and judgment arrested me in my sinful act, the Invisible hand had interposed to save me from perdition.

During my earlier years, and for some time after

I entered the dwelling of Mr. ———, although unacquainted with real religion, I had been kept by the restraining and favouring hand of God more orderly in my general conduct than many. Also, I had the privilege of attending twice every Sabbath on Dr. Jack's ministry, (a stipulation that my father had made in binding me apprentice,) and I have often promised God, under the miseries which I had to endure, that if he would bring me through this and that trouble, I would turn from evil, and serve him all the days of my life! But "Ephraim's goodness is as the morning cloud and the early dew, it passeth away." (Hosea vi. 4.) Although in listening to Dr. Jack's discourses I have often trembled, like Felix, as he talked of death and judgment; yet, bad example, evil communications, and a sinful nature were not long in overturning all my best resolutions and undermining my principles.

Before this period my father's prospects had begun to decline; the branch of trade in which he was engaged, and which had hitherto been so successful, showed symptoms of the general depression complained of in Manchester. The powerful friends, who in my mother's lifetime had willingly offered assistance in any difficulty, had, upon the second marriage, all discontinued their intimacy; and when my father required to be supported, none of his former friends offered their aid. My father struggled against adversity as long as he was able, and finding it hopeless to persevere, he made over his machinery and effects to his creditors by a deed of assignment; and was then compelled by circumstances to enter into the employment of the very persons with whom he had set out as master cotton-spinner. He was in this way reduced to poverty, and had to work for his living until he was upwards of seventy years of age, the period of his decease.

I have already said that the influence of evil associates and evil conversation began seriously to affect my principles. I think that from this period, which was before I had served half my apprenticeship, I gradually declined in morals and in the profession of religion, until I ceased to preserve even the external form of it.

When about eighteen years of age I drank into a curious spirit of inquiry, as to which was the right religion amongst the various sects around me. I observed that they all drew, or pretended to draw, their opinions from the Bible. I was naturally of an inquiring character and fond of an argument, and I thought that I would pursue the investigation in a deliberate manner; but as this spirit of inquiry proceeded less from an honest desire for truth, than from a speculative turn of mind, that which began in the flesh soon ended there. I had by this time lost all desire—if ever I really possessed any—for divine teaching; my resolution was to think for myself, or, in other words, to lean entirely to my own understanding, and to sift all the opinions which I had received from early education, whether parental or ministerial. The veneration in which I had hitherto held religion and religious people, had already begun to decline, and a suspicion that my father had led me blindfold, made me now resolve to believe nothing which appeared to be beyond my natural comprehension, or opposed to human reason, and to discard every statement as unworthy of credit, which could not be reduced to mathematical demonstration.

I am fully convinced that infidelity lies at the bottom of every man's heart in the fall, and it would require no great foresight to predict the issue of my newly acquired sentiments.

Formerly, as stated before, I had made many attempts to become religious, and had occasionally suc-

ceeded in effecting a change of external deportment, and in attending to the observance of certain forms and duties; but finding these fits of religion invariably give way after a short trial, and that I relapsed to my old ways and habits, I began to entertain a suspicion that the ministers of religion had either wilfully misled me, or knew very little about it themselves, and that their statements of man's having the power to turn to God and be saved, must be altogether erroneous.

Satan now prompted me to commence my search after truth at the groundwork, and he set me to examine the doctrine of the *ever-blessed Trinity*. Upon this point I had often been much perplexed; I had consulted my father, and had attended a course of lectures by Dr. Jack on the subject, but with no satisfaction or useful results: therefore, resolving to act upon my newly adopted system, (to withhold my assent to that which was beyond the limits of human reason,) I stumbled, through pride, ignorance, and unbelief, at the very threshold of Divine Revelation, and denied that holy truth.

Upon the subject of *Election* I was next assailed, the natural enmity of the heart readily aiding in opposing a doctrine which placed the salvation of man in the sovereign will and choice of Jehovah. My froward pharisaic mind at once learnt, not only to reject, but to revile that doctrine. Arminianism suited me better; it held out a chance of salvation to every man, and I determined to abide by that creed. I never liked Arminians, and never associated with them; but their doctrines of freewill and human merit are pleasing to the proud nature of man. Yet let me at this time say that, whatever the Arminian heresy might do for others, it led me rapidly into the depths of infidelity.

Having thus abandoned those doctrines of grace which I had received from childhood, and to the truth

of which my natural unrenewed mind had assented, I at once degenerated in moral character, and lost even moral perceptions. And, alas! I began to slight and despise the Word of God, and to curse and swear.

For a period of some months I imbibed the worse than hellish principles of Atheism; but the writings of a certain apostle of Deism (who pretends to prove the being of God from the existence of creatures) falling in my way, I became a convert to his opinions, and remained a Deist for five years. I now openly denied that the Bible was a book of Divine Revelation, and ventured to suppose that it had been put together by a set of monks. I questioned whether Jesus Christ had ever lived upon earth, and positively denied his being Deity. I had no regard for one sentence in the divine Word, and I made a common jest of Bible saints. I blasphemed the name of Jesus, denied that there was any sin in the world, and believed neither in a judgment to come, nor in the doctrine of eternal punishment. I thought that there was a God, but of his nature or his attributes I could come to no definite opinion. I doubted whether man had a soul, or whether there was a hereafter, but I concluded that if it were so, God being merciful, all mankind would be happy. I flattered myself that God was so good that he never would visit a soul with everlasting punishment for a few faults committed in this short life. I fancied that God must necessarily be pleased with all his creatures, and that there would be no devil and no hell. I acknowledged that in this world there were vice and virtue; they appeared to me as the dark and bright shades in the picture of human life; I supposed the dark to be needful in heightening the effect of the bright ones, but I concluded that the Deity was pleased with the whole as a whole. "Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself." Ps. l. 21.

Having with much mental labour and ingenuity fabricated this scheme, with which I was then pleased and not a little proud, I called these my principles, and boasted that they would never be overthrown. I praised virtue and censured vice, and yet mine was but a miserable kind of virtue, for I frequented the theatre, fairs, and races, and was guilty of swearing, of telling falsehoods in jest, of blaspheming, and of associating with evil companions. I longed for the pleasures of the world, and sighed after its vain delights; and many follies that circumstances prevented me from committing, I followed in my idle imagination.

CHAPTER II.

END OF APPRENTICESHIP—LAUNCHES INTO THE WORLD —PLEASURABLE
ANTICIPATIONS — DISAPPOINTMENT — REMARKABLE WARNING BY A
DREAM—MARRIAGE TRIALS—CHASTISEMENTS.

AT length my apprenticeship was ended, and with what delight did I hail this freedom from restraint, and rejoice in the prospect of liberty to swim unmolested through an imaginary ocean of pleasures! What pictures had I drawn of this alluring flesh-pleasing world! and what schemes had I laid for its enjoyment! With all the eagerness of pursuit I hurried after its pleasures, and I am now persuaded, that had not an unseen but mighty hand prevented, I should have gone far more deeply into evil; but, through the restraining power of God, I was kept entirely from falling into the sin of unchastity,—a mercy for which I desire to bless God while I have a being. Yet pleasure, sinful pleasure, was the God I then worshipped, and although in the pursuit of it I experienced continual disappointment, and my pride received repeated wounds, and my ambition many a mortification, yet I still pursued the phantom: I constantly hoped at some time or other to attain that happiness of which I was in search. But I was seeking that which I believe no one ever did find, or ever will find, in this vain transitory world; real contentment is not to be found in earthly pleasures. A life spent in these pursuits is certain to end in disappointment and vexation of spirit, and, should Sovereign mercy prevent not, in death and in everlasting destruction! Sin is the honey of worldly pleasure, and a holy and

wise God has decreed that whoever follows that, shall sooner or later feel that he has acted the part of the fool ! and this I lived to prove.

About this time I had a dream, the impression of which I never wholly lost, although at that time I was unable either to understand it, or to profit by the warning. One night, as I slept, I dreamt that I was at Shudehill, Manchester. I thought it was about two o'clock in the afternoon of the darkest and most gloomy day that I had ever seen. It was deeply impressed on my mind that my death was at hand ; and I thought that I must first compose my own epitaph, and immediately commenced it as I walked along. When I had completed it, an apprehension seized me that the earth was about to open under my feet, receive me, and close upon me for ever. In momentary expectation of this event happening, I stepped slowly and cautiously, and full of anxiety and terror. The darkness was continually increasing, until it exceeded all that I had ever seen—when in an instant, and as if by magic, that awfully black and gloomy day was exchanged for the fairest and brightest that : my imagination had ever pictured : the sun shone in refulgent splendour, the sky was a brilliant blue and cloudless ; on each side, and before me, lay beautiful green fields here and there studded with trees. The birds were singing in the branches, and the whole scene appeared to me enchanting. Before me, at some distance, stood what seemed like a church, and the sun was shining pleasantly upon it. In the front of this building I observed groups of persons who appeared to be foreigners, their skin was a little tanned by the sun, but their features and forms were exquisitely beautiful. Whether these persons were men or women I could not tell ; each was dressed in the Oriental costume, with flowing robes, and they all appeared united in love and harmony. Each held

in either hand a large basket of ripe purple grapes, and the bunches hung in clusters over the sides of the baskets. Suddenly, and with admirable softness and melody, they all burst into a song! Their words, their music, and their manner struck me as rapturous and heavenly, and I was filled with admiring wonder and esteem. I could not understand the language in which they spoke, it being entirely new to me, but I thought, "Ah! you are the happy people; you carry your heaven along with you. Oh, that I were one amongst you!" The feeling of admiration was so strong, and the desire to become one of them so powerful, that the agitation produced in my mind awoke me. For a long time during that night I lay and pined after that heavenly company. I could not attempt to unfold the dream.

The next day, when at my usual occupation, I could not help musing on its singularity, and wondering what it might portend. An aged saint, who perceived a change in my countenance, made inquiries which led me to relate to her my dream. She was greatly touched by it, and quitting her seat came up close to me, and looking earnestly in my face, said—"You are a Deist now, I think?" I replied that I was. "Mark my words, now," said she, "you will never die a Deist." I was more affected by her words than I was then willing to admit; but she lived to see them fulfilled, and to hear me relate what the Lord had done for my soul: my account gave her great satisfaction and pleasure.

During my seven years' hard bondage, I had acquired, from the ill-treatment which has been already detailed, a dislike of my employer and his household (with one exception) amounting to absolute hatred; so that at the end of my apprenticeship, I determined for ever to renounce all intercourse with any of the family. But, strange to say, in the turns of God's providence, my

acquaintance was renewed with the eldest daughter—the only person who had ever shown me kindness; and from mutual preference and affection, we were shortly afterwards married. She was in her nineteenth year, and a Deist like myself. Our awful infidel principles were deeply rooted, and we both resolved to live and die in them. Formalists, or hypocrites, there was no danger of our becoming, for such was the hatred of my heart to the religion of Jesus Christ and to his person, that nothing but the almighty power of God could ever have brought me to profess that holy name. But God's ways are not our ways, he leads the blind in a way they know not. My dear wife, by the converting grace of God, became eventually a highly favoured Christian. She proved an excellent wife to me, my greatest earthly comfort, and a shining vessel of God's rich mercy.

At the period of our marriage (May 1814), "peace and plenty" was the universal expectation; and having no stock in hand for commencing life, we relied mainly on our mutual assiduity and industry. We considered that we held our fortunes in our own hands, and in this presumptuous confidence we had no anxious fears for the future, but rather looked forward to the success of our diligent efforts, and to a life of much happiness and enjoyment.

But God had a work to do in us that we knew not of, and therefore he began "to dig about" us. During the first year and a half of our union, His hand crossed us in so extraordinary and striking a manner, that to this day I can affirm I have never witnessed anything to be compared to it with any other persons. We were thwarted in our undertakings, disappointed in our expectations, and driven from place to place. We prospered in nothing. It is written, "The Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them." The hand of the Lord was gone

out against me, but I knew it not. In consequence of the depression of the branch of the trade in which I was employed, I was frequently without work, and we were often reduced to such straits and difficulties as even to suffer from cold and hunger. My first child had to endure many privations, which tried me exceedingly, and in those days of ignorance and unbelief often made me ready to curse my hard fate.

My dear wife had typhus fever for four months, during which time we appeared to be quite deserted by every one. I was her only nurse, and had to sit by her side and watch the progress of the malady until I became so hopeless and wretched, under the accumulated trials, that my health failed, and I longed for death as affording the only prospect of relief. Yet, under all this severe chastisement I remained firm and unmoved in my opinions. I greatly felt for and pitied my wife and child, but in all other respects my heart remained as hard as adamant. I can set my seal to those lines of Mr. Kent :—

“ Judgments or mercies ne’er can sway
Their roving feet to wisdom’s way.”

CHAPTER III.

[1816.]

CONVERSION—DIVINE WRATH—TERRORS—"JESUS CHRIST"—BEGOTTEN
AGAIN TO A LIVELY HOPE—PROCURES A BIBLE—FIRST PRAYER—
BEADS DILIGENTLY—"ELECTION."

IT was shortly after my wife's illness, viz. about the end of January, 1816, that, on returning from my work one Saturday evening, I found that a sum of money which we were expecting, had not been received; this disappointment, which I foresaw would inevitably involve us in difficulties and privations during the ensuing week, so vexed and exasperated me, that I flew into a violent passion, rose from my seat and uttered a dreadful volley of blasphemous oaths and curses.

Wonder, O heavens! and be astonished, O earth! In an instant—swift as the lightning's flash, and more terrible than the loudest thunder—these words struck into my soul:—

"Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me." Deut. xxviii. 16—20.

Overwhelmed by the power of these words I stag-

gered—reeled—sunk back into my chair, and burst into a flood of tears. The Lord had opened my eyes to see, and my heart to feel that there was above me a holy, righteous, sin-hating, sin-avenging God, and that if I lived and died as I was, I should be lost eternally. In one moment my fabric of Deism was demolished.

“The voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.” Ps. xxix. 4, 5. For ever adored be the name of Almighty God. Amen, Hallelujah.

I needed no man to tell me whose voice this was. The testimony even of an angel from heaven would have been light, compared with the Power which I then felt in my heart and conscience. I well knew that this was the voice of God, but I did not know that it was sent to bring about my conversion in due time. In the words of Habakkuk, iii. 16, “When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself.” In an agony of terror, and without uttering a word to my wife, I hurried out of the house and went into those very fields, where lay the scene of my dream already related. My object was to escape from the dwellings of man, and to shun his society: I had the revelation of God’s wrath in my conscience, and I apprehended it to be the beginning and foretaste of eternal damnation. I concluded that, like Cain, I was doomed to be a fugitive and a vagabond upon the earth during an appointed period; and then to reap, in an eternal hereafter, the bitter fruits and consequences of my wickedness. God made me drink that night of the wine of astonishment; my sighs and groans, and even my tears were abundant; for who can say, but such as have drunk of that cup, how bitter it is! A soul must have passed under a sense of God’s wrath to enter into my

feelings. I believe that God upheld me with one hand, whilst he chastened me with the other. My horrible blasphemies stared me in the face, and I feared that I had rushed on the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler. Bless the Lord, O my soul, for saving me through that night; it was one of anguish and agony to me,—a night never to be erased from my memory! My friends, sin brings sorrow sooner or later, this we all shall find. How dreadful did sin appear to me now! I loathed and abhorred myself, and concluded that I was abhorred of God. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee unto judgment." O solemn words! and in their experience how bitter!

Towards midnight I returned to my dwelling, slept a little, and awoke under the same terrors: I was full of the fury of the Lord. I rose, paced the room, sat down in astonishment, and wondered where all would end. About noon I took up a book and read a few pages of Mr. Newton's preface to Cowper's poems. I was surprised to find he described the state in which I had been; but when he adds these words, "Without God in the world," like an arrow from the bow, they entered my heart, and I fell under the conviction of their truth; I saw that I had lived without God in the world, and to this cause I ascribed all my miseries. Again I sunk in despair, and throwing down my book, I recommenced pacing the room. As I hurried to and fro, the name of "*Jesus Christ*" seemed to pass through my mind: it was repeated—I heard no vocal sound, it was a loud internal whisper through my soul. It came continuously for the space of about two hours—"Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ!" Arrested by the words, I marvelled why

that name should so powerfully and incessantly vibrate through my soul!—that name which during five years I had so wickedly derided, so awfully blasphemed! Still, the name passed through my soul, and with such power and light as recalled the hidden malice of my heart against the Lord Jesus, and the evil thoughts that I had indulged in towards him. And yet I felt inspired by a secret drawing towards that holy name; and a glimmering hope arose, that if ever deliverance should be wrought for one so lost and vile as I, *that* deliverance would come from Jesus Christ! My hope was the faintest that can be imagined: but I believe all this was a divine impression; and I have since judged, that from this hour I was a *quickenèd soul*.

Were I in Manchester I could go to the very spot where God's arrows first pierced my heart, and where this singular visitation was experienced by me. The slight relief which I had obtained was not lasting, for when the name was no longer repeated my fears returned. I now eagerly wished to see a Bible. I had not possessed one of my own for years, and had scarcely read any part of the Scriptures, but I now ardently longed to possess them. That very afternoon (it was Sunday) we were visited by a friend who had been at school with my wife, and who had continued her friendship when we were deserted by almost all others; I therefore felt that I could address her on the subject of my solicitude, and the more readily as she was considered a highly moral character, and a constant attendant at St. Clement's Church. On my wife leaving the room, I went towards her, and with the terrors of hell in my conscience, and anguish in my countenance, "Oh, my friend," I said, "I feel that I am one of the greatest sinners in the town—but God has stopped me! Do you think there can be any mercy for such a sinner as I am? Oh, how much I desire to

ible!" Our friend looked alarmed, she drew her chair, and never uttered a word. I believe her agitated appearance terrified her. My friend turned, and they conversed together a while, the lady occasionally glancing towards me with an expression of surprise and pity; she soon took leave. That evening and all the next day I was in a mire, where there is no standing! On the evening, when I returned from my employment, she met me with a contemptuous smile, saying, "What is going to be done now? Miss F—— has come, and brought you a new Bible." I took it, and made no comment beyond—"Oh, has she?"—But if any attitude arose in any heart, it was excited in my heart by the kindness of that present. Many a prayer was put up to God for the salvation of her soul. I wrote to her occasionally after I left Manchester, and my memory (for she is now deceased) will bear witness to me; but whether she reaped any benefit from my prayers I never had any means of ascertaining. The taunting of my dear wife on delivering the Bible did not surprise me; I was aware of her state of mind, although she was ignorant of mine; I therefore made no reply, but with my candle and my book I went to an upper room: there, alone, and in a solemn manner, I kissed the Bible, and with my hand and with inexpressibly deep feelings, I entered, for the first time in my life, to pour out my heart unto God, as far as I can remember, in these

God, I am a great sinner,—I have *no religion*, I know not what religion is, or what is truth; I am ignorant of the knowledge of the things written in the book which I now hold in my hand, and which I believe to be thy book. O God, open my blind eyes, and if thou canst show mercy to such a sinful creature as I am, O God, show mercy unto me!"

I then sat down and read the first chapter of Matthew, with the intention of proceeding through the Evangelists. I read in a most careful and solemn manner, believing every word I read to be the truth of God, as firmly as though I had heard an angel proclaim it from heaven. I found the word of God to be "quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and the marrow, a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and that all things were naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Heb. iv. 12, 13. I felt I had a soul, and that my heart was laid open before the all-searching eye of God. The sword of the Spirit cut me up effectually; and as I knew not my interest in the promises, every chapter I read seemed more or less to condemn me. When I came to the 11th chapter of Matthew, 25th verse,—“I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes,”—the words immediately arrested my attention; I laid down my book, exclaiming aloud, “Why, *Election is true!* the doctrine of Election is a *Bible truth!*” Human power had all failed to convince me of this; and now the first truth that was shown me from reading the word of God was election. I clearly saw that there was a *chosen* people, and that this people would be eternally saved; but then followed the agonizing thought, that they would be in heaven, and I might be in hell. Yet this apprehension only increased the vehemence of my supplications; for as I read that few would be saved, I became the more urgent that peradventure I might find myself among that number. The truth of election was thus no hindrance to me; it cut down my pride, and made me tremble, but it never had any tendency to stop my cry or produce despair. I believe that election, when it is

received in the *power* of God, operates to humble the sinner, and cause him to cry aloud for mercy ; to stimulate him to diligence in supplication—not to induce apathy and sloth ; to raise to hope rather than sink to despondency.

From this time until my deliverance (a period of three or four months), I believe I was not suffered to lose five minutes of my leisure. The grace of God engaged me in self-examination, reading, hearing, or prayer—the last particularly. I often prayed mentally while my hands were occupied. This was the Lord's doing, and he shall have the glory. These words often sounded in my ears,—“ Flee from the wrath to come,” (Matt. iii. 7;) and, “ Escape for thy life ; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain ; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.” Gen. xix. 17. I can truly say the world was little to me then ; for, to use the language of John Bunyan, “ All my concern was about saving or damning.” I was strongly impelled to kneel down and try to pray. Formerly, in the days of my ignorance, I had uttered many a fine orison to the moon, but now I could scarcely find words to pour out the feelings of my heart ; yet assuredly the Holy Ghost interceded for me with groanings that could not be uttered. In these consist the life of prayer, for they are those spiritual throes or pangs which, according to the promise, must needs bring deliverance. Shortly after this I read in John iii. 3, “ Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Through the divine power, these words laid fast hold of me, and I received them into my heart ; and although unable clearly to comprehend what it was to be “ born again,” yet I believed that work to be a mysterious, spiritual change which must be wrought in a man before he could see or enter into

the kingdom of God. This conviction produced a strong desire that the Lord would effect this work in me; and in a very simple but urgent manner I often prayed that I might be born again.

“ Daily we groan and mourn
Beneath the weight of sin;
We pray to be new born,
Yet know not what we mean :
We think it something very great,
Something that's undiscover'd yet.”

These were my feelings. A few days after, on reading that passage in John xiv. 6, a divine power applied them to my mind: “ Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” Light came with this Scripture, showing that there was but one door leading to the Father, and that door was Christ. I felt sure that no sinner, whether Jew or Gentile, could approach God the Father in any other way; that a sinner might as easily scale the walls of heaven; that all must bend and stoop to Christ, entering into life by him alone, or be damned without remedy: I saw there was no middle path. What God taught me in that hour was decisive, nor has he ever suffered me to swerve from it. I still look upon that passage as a most remarkable text in Scripture. It was followed by, “ Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name; ask and receive, that your joy may be full.” Previously to my receiving these Scriptures I had not dared to mention the name of Christ in my prayers: now, not only was Christ prominently set before me as the door by which I might find access to the Father; but I was distinctly enabled to see, that had I but faith in his name, I should yet succeed: nay, that weak as was my little faith, and many as were my fears, yet if I carried Jesus Christ with me in all my approaches to the Father, I should prevail.

The blind popish priest carries his silver cross before him; the Spirit of God now taught me to present Jesus Christ. The name of Jesus Christ from this period was first and last, and often pleaded in all my attempts at prayer, and will I trust through the mercy of God for ever be, while I am an inhabitant of earth. But how to plead by faith in the name of Jesus, is a *holy art* for which we continually need the fresh teachings and leadings of the Holy Spirit.

Thus the Lord the Spirit led me steadily onward. I had conflicts, bondage, and fears; a holy vehemence and wrestling in prayer was given to me, such as I would that I had at this day! But underneath this work of supplication, the work of conviction was at the same time being carried on daily and hourly. My heart sins seemed to come upon me like an armed troop, my outward sins appeared too many and too great for forgiveness, and the terrors of God set themselves in array against me. The arrows of the Almighty were in me, the poison whereof drank up my spirit. I doubted, desponded, and often almost despaired of mercy, and I thought the day would come when God would cut me off, and doom me to eternal death; the fear of this drove me to cry and even roar for deliverance; with David I ejaculated, "Attend to the words of my roaring."

After about five weeks passed in this state of mind, I went for the first time to a place of worship. It was Cannon-street Chapel. As I arrived at the door, they were singing,

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove."

My heart joined, but my courage failed me; as I stood thus hesitating, a gentleman came up. The pew-opener invited us to enter; my companion complied, and, ashamed to refuse, I followed him; but as I put my foot on the threshold, these words fell

upon my spirit—"Two men shall be in the city; the one shall be taken, the other left." This almost made my hair stand erect, for I felt as if the hand of God was leading me in. I hung down my head from fear and sorrow at the remembrance of my horrid sins and blasphemies, and was so confused that I heard nothing of the service until the preacher rose to read his text,—"Will ye also be his disciples?" John ix. 27. The words entered my mind with great power, they so dissolved my heart, that I wept like Mary at the Master's feet. "O blessed Lord," I ejaculated, "how gladly would I be *thy disciple* if thou wouldst receive me!" Of the sermon I could understand not one sentence; but after I knew the Lord, I was at no loss to account for this circumstance, for it was then evident to me that the preacher himself was out of the secret.

CHAPTER IV.

[1816.]

NEW TRIALS—ILLNESS OF ONLY CHILD—"SPIRITUAL TRAVAIL" FOR HIM—"IT IS WELL WITH THE CHILD"—DEATH—ATTENDS DR. JACK—MR. ROBY—TEMPTATIONS—FRESH CONDEMNATION—CONTINUED WRESTLING.

AT this period a domestic affliction overtook us: our only child was seized with measles. From the first I detected the nature of the disorder, and was convinced it would be fatal. The conviction was followed quickly by a deep distress about his eternal safety. "This child has received from us a sinful being, he will soon die, and what will become of his soul?" Such were my reflections. Not that he had been guilty to my knowledge of actual transgression—for he was but thirteen months old—but because he was like myself, a sinner by nature, according to those words of the psalmist—"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Ps. li. This text was set before me, and proved to me conclusively that not one of Adam's race could escape everlasting wrath, unless he had, before he quitted this world, received pardon through the blood of Christ and cleansing by the Holy Ghost.

What God would do with others I did not now inquire, all my concern was for my own child. It was a "spiritual and sharp travail" laid upon me by the Holy Ghost, which I could neither bring on nor get rid of; and being at that period out of employment, I was led to spend most of my time in offering up strong cries and tears to God for the salvation of

the child. In this travail I was helped mightily; my convictions grew deeper; a spirit of repentance and contrition was poured upon me; in prayer I was enlarged and carried beyond myself. The Lord gave me a mighty wrestling power; my heart seemed well broken, and I believe I was made as a little child. The word of God was now very precious to me; I searched it much, and was led to pray for instruction in it.

On coming to Acts xix. 20, I collected all my wicked and sinful books and papers, and burnt them to ashes: "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." I beheld much of the awful majesty of God in his word, was greatly humbled in spirit, and so affected by these discoveries, that I importuned the Lord without ceasing for an interest in the blood of Christ for myself, and especially for my child. If ever the blood of Jesus Christ was precious to any soul, it was precious at this moment to mine.

These trials and exercises lasted without intermission until the sixth day of the child's illness, which was the Sabbath. My mind was then distressed for a few moments by the thought that baptism with water was necessary to his safety. Being alone with him for two hours during the Sabbath afternoon, it occurred to me to baptize him with my own hands; but a sight and sense of my sins and transgressions (which were all as yet unpardoned) at once banished the idea. Another course presented itself, and this I adopted. Placing my boy on the bed before me, and solemnly giving him up into the hand of the Lord, for life or death, I locked the door, laid myself down on my face upon the floor (after the example of David), and began earnestly to wrestle in prayer for his salvation. I was deeply humbled before the Saviour's feet, and helped to cry aloud; to the honour of God solely let it be said, all this was done in an

extraordinary manner. These words were sent in answer:—"The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." They came with divine influence, and drew forth all the energy of my soul in earnest entreaty and unutterable groanings, not for my own, but for my poor boy's salvation. These were followed by further answers: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And, "I say unto you, their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." The glad tidings of the safety of my poor dying babe, which these passages now discovered to me, filled my heart with holy gratitude. I lay adoring the God of all grace for his mercy to my child, and justified him even in my own condemnation. For him I wept, I trembled, I gave thanks (although my own interest in Christ was as yet concealed from me), and I arose from the ground with the answer to my petitions. From this time not another petition ascended for him; prayer was turned to solemn thanksgiving.

The next day Satan began to rage against us. We occupied a lodging as weekly tenants. Our landlord had, without any notice to us, let the house to a stranger. The new landlady was a coarse, violent, and profane woman; she demanded immediate possession, replied to our tale of distress by abuse, and threatened to throw our goods into the street if we did not remove them in two hours. I left my child, and finally found a new lodging. Our little remnant of furniture was soon transported thither, most of it having been sold under the pressure of want. I then wrapped my poor sick and dying child in a blanket, and carried him through the streets to our new home. His cries and moans pierced the air and rent the breast of his afflicted father; but a holy resignation prevailed, and I remember saying to him as I crossed

a very wide street, "My poor child, thou art going to leave this wicked world for a better. Hush, hush, my dear babe! thou wilt soon be in the arms of thy heavenly Father, and wilt be numbered with the blessed, where there will be no more sorrow nor crying."

The next evening I was summoned from my work to see the dear child in the agonies of death. I held his hand, and my eyes were fixed upon him; his looks might have pierced a harder heart than mine; but dearly as I had loved him from the first day of his birth until now, grace was triumphant over nature, and I was enabled to give him up into the hands of his heavenly Father. The power of God subdued the natural feelings of the parent, and bestowed such a spirit of resignation and patience, that I could sit at his bedside and watch life's flickering lamp, satisfied that not one pang or pain could be felt beyond what the Father of mercies had appointed. I knew my child to be in good hands, and my soul was still; not a tear flowed, not a murmuring rebellious feeling moved, and when the last struggle was over, patience in him had had her perfect work. Had any one asked, "Is it well with the child?" I should have replied, with an energy not natural to me, "It is well!"

That was a solemn, peaceful scene to me: the world with its vain show was as nothing, but Christ—eternal life in Christ, was all in all. We disposed of nearly all we possessed in order to lay the dear child's body in the grave.

It was on the 5th of March, 1816, that he died, after eight days' illness. This dispensation was greatly sanctified to me. It deepened my convictions, detached me from the world, and enlarged my spiritual desires. "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" These were the words which

now followed me continually, and turned me away from all objects but one—the salvation of my soul.

On the 10th of March, 1816, I began to attend Mr. Jack's chapel, for the first time since the days of my apprenticeship. My father still went there. Mr. Jack was a good man, but it was not the will of God to make his preaching useful to me.

About the same time I likewise attended the evening service at the chapel of Mr. William Roby. I was at once arrested by his plainness of speech, and by his honest, persevering and fervent zeal for the souls of men. Mr. Roby was an alarming and, according to the light he possessed, a most faithful teacher. I listened eagerly to every word, for up to this period my fears were stronger than my hopes. But, for my own part, I gained from his preaching nothing but condemnation, and some little instruction. Yet his honest dealing suited me well; flattery and temporising I abhorred. By the grace of God I was ardently longing for salvation, and the enlightening, comforting, and sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost. These were the mercies for which day and night I besought the Lord, and begged that the Spirit would intercede for me with "groanings which cannot be uttered." My soul was set in the right way, but I did not know it. Occasionally these words struck me, "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." I certainly then had a broken heart, and a contrite spirit; I dared not take to myself the comfort of that passage, but I continued to watch and wait. At chapel I was tempted with wandering thoughts, but the Lord enabled me to pray against them, and made his strength perfect in my weakness, so that I rarely lost one word, for I watched the testimony as a man between life and death. Yet, during several weeks, I seemed to learn nothing beyond what God had himself taught me; and I

considered this as an unfavourable symptom of my case. The first sermon that was ever much blessed to me was from a stranger.

On going as usual to Lloyd-street Chapel one Sunday morning, I was disappointed to see the pulpit occupied by a person of small stature and insignificant appearance. From so weak an instrument I expected to derive little benefit, but the Lord says, "Look not upon the height of his stature," and again, "The Lord seeth not as man seeth;" and so it proved. The subject of the discourse was the parable of the Publican and Pharisee. The preacher first described the religion of the pharisee, a religion which my soul abhorred; he then entered into the state and feelings of the publican, and thus came into mine. As he detailed and traced out the character, he deeply interested me; but when he uttered, "God be merciful to me a sinner," who can tell with what almighty power those words entered my soul! Such was the divine light, that I was conscious I had an immortal soul; I saw the glorious majesty of God displayed, and I felt the mighty rays of the Sun of righteousness penetrating me. I seemed prostrate and humbled in the very dust, and feelingly shrank beneath the *power* that was in operation. It showed me that I was a very great sinner, and yet it greatly raised my hope of being saved. It made mercy sweet, Christ precious, and heaven desirable. It loosened my soul from earth and elevated it to God. The visitation was so solemn, so blessed, and so ecstatic, that I can never hope to describe it. Hiding my face with my hands I leant forward, and with all the powers of my soul I silently adored the God of heaven for the mercy so wonderfully displayed towards me. From that hour to this I have firmly believed that the *power* of a gracious God, as put forth in the soul of man, is mightier than in aught else under heaven! The rest of the service

passed unheeded ; and at its close, seeking a secluded spot, I there in private poured out my praises and thanksgivings.

“ To him the poor lift up their eyes,
Their faces feel the heavenly shine ;
A beam of mercy from the skies,
Fills them with light and joy divine.”

My reflection as I walked homewards was—“ Men and brethren, there is a *solemn reality* in the religion of Christ Jesus ! Oh, for more of its vital power, that I may bring forth fruits meet for repentance ! ”

I had both comfortings and castings down. Dr. Jack, I heard, was attacked with sudden illness, and having a strong regard for him as a man of God, I felt my heart much drawn out, and I was led to pray for his recovery, and for spiritual blessings on his soul. The Lord in answer to my prayer sent this text,—“ Hereby we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”

But a new temptation again spread darkness over my skies. The adversary of my soul charged me with having committed the unpardonable sin. What this meant I knew not, but concluded that it pointed to some of my awful blasphemies against the name of Jesus, and his word, which might well be unpardonable. Only those who have passed through this temptation will understand the suffering of it. The hope which I had received now fled, and doubts and fears overwhelmed me. Again I was a wretched vessel tossed on the sea of divine wrath. The impending curse of it seemed to extend even to my food, and I dreaded to eat lest there should be a curse there ; when one day at dinner, the tears falling on my plate, this passage was sent with a comforting power to my soul : —“ All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” I did not then receive a sense of pardon of sin, but I felt satisfied that the unpardonable sin,

whatever it might be, I had not committed. Still, this great relief was not effectual to restrain those doubts and fears which arose, as many of my dreadful sins presented themselves in array before me.

Mr. Roby's ministry was, as I have already said, a very searching one: and as I preferred this kind of faithful dealing, I quitted Dr. Jack; but I was much cut up and condemned, and continually followed by these and other similar Scriptures:—"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Ps. ix. 17. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." Ps. xi. 6. "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. Such words as the above were like a two-edged sword; they appeared to cleave the soul and spirit asunder. But the following passage came in a different way: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isa. lv. 7. The Lord, however, kept me sighing and groaning, and crying for mercy; and I gave him no rest, for the *avenger of blood* was close behind me.

CHAPTER V.

[1816.]

CHRIST REVEALED—PARDON RECEIVED.

IN the state of mind which I have just narrated, I continued for about four months from the eventful night of my awakening. I had now come to the conclusion that I had stood as long as I was able under the floods of revealed wrath. That evening, as usual, I went to hear Mr. Roby. Strange and mingled feelings filled my mind, and I had a strong presentiment that I should that night know the worst! that I should either hear the voice of mercy and forgiveness, or receive my dreadful doom! I expected, or rather feared, that God would give the preacher a testimony by which my damnation would be for ever sealed. Under these impressions, and trembling in every limb, I took a seat away from the people, and against the wall, and there awaited my final sentence.

As the service proceeded, I anxiously watched for the text, which I had persuaded myself would be full of the wrath of God, and all levelled at me. It was in Acts iv. 12: "Neither is there salvation in any other." These words brought me some relief. Mr. Roby commenced his discourse in a very serious manner, and then proceeded to the inward evidences of being in a state of grace. I was all breathless attention; and as he brought forward many evidences, and dwelt upon them in succession, my conscience bore

me witness, and I solemnly said, (within myself,) "I know that—and I have felt that—and that." And as I could respond to what he described, my fears began to subside, and hope gradually to rise higher and higher. But now, on a sudden, a terrible blast from the powers of hell poured in upon me, and swept away my hope, and all the ministerial comfort which I had received. It was suggested, "All *that* is only what Mr. Roby says;" and knowing I durst not build upon a human, or even upon an angelic testimony, I immediately sunk fathoms deep into what Jonah calls the belly of hell, ejaculating, "It is all over with me now! I am lost!—lost for ever!—I shall rise no more!" But, blessed be God for his unspeakable mercy, with the rapidity of the lightning's flash, and before my astonished mind could realize the transition, the dear Lord Jesus Christ entered my very heart and soul, revealing to me his person as the Son of God in human flesh, his presence, his atoning blood, his righteousness, his salvation, and his everlasting love to my soul. The power and energy of this manifestation, legions of devils could never have withstood! I saw Satan fall from the expectation of his prey like lightning, and this passage came with a mighty, saving efficacy—"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Rom. x. 4. It was instantly followed by this, "Or ever I was aware, my soul had made me like the chariots of Amminadib." My heart was so filled with the glories of Christ, that he seemed for an instant to withdraw himself, as though the revelation would overcome me; but feeling his absence, I cried out, "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that I may look upon thee." Cant. vi. 13. He again entered my soul with his train of graces; he took his seat upon the throne of my heart, and swaying his sceptre over me, he drew my soul a willing and delighted captive, in holy

triumph at his chariot wheels. Pardon for all the black scroll of my offences was now sealed upon my conscience, under the power of the blood of sprinkling; I saw by faith, his righteousness, and he covered my soul with it. His salvation was stamped upon my heart, and the love of God was powerfully shed abroad. Magnificent *grace* opened her treasures, and I sensibly felt its overflowing tide pouring into my bosom. The chief of sinners was dazzled by its glories, and vanquished by its all-conquering power. Doubts and fears were swept away by the rich streams of covenant mercy; and the mighty love of God came in these words, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

I saw nothing with my bodily eyes, but with the eye of faith I beheld and gazed upon my glorious Redeemer. The blessed Spirit then enabled me, for the first time in my life, to cry "Abba, Father." Yes, and I felt that God was *my Father!* Who can describe the solace, the joy of this assurance! I seemed another being! The Sun of righteousness shone blessedly upon my soul, the guilt and condemnation of all my dreadful sins were removed—of this I had not the shadow of a doubt. Silently, but fervently, I now adored the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. My soul broke out in strains before unknown to me, "Bless the Lord, O my soul! and all that is within me, bless His holy name." Contrition, brokenness of spirit, repentance, humility, faith, hope, love, and the fear of the Lord, were all awakened. My sackcloth was taken off, the veil was removed. I sat as in a heavenly place, possessing joy unspeakable and full of glory. This was the Lord's doing, and without any instrument. I had heard nothing of the sermon beyond what I have stated. My cup was now full, and I longed for the moment of dismissal, that I might pour out before the Lord the overflowing of

my ecstatic soul. The preacher gave out that beautiful hymn of Dr. Watts :

“ Not all the blood of beasts,
On Jewish altars slain—”

this called up my attention ; and, unknown to myself, I sung so loud that the people turned to look ; but no one there knew anything of me or of my joys. As soon as possible I escaped from the crowd, eager to find some retired spot, where, far from the abodes of men, I might feel alone with God. My year of Jubilee was come. The Son had made me free, and I was free indeed ! He had released me from the bonds of sin, the world, Satan, conscience, wrath, and law. I thought of the lame man healed by Peter at the Beautiful gate of the temple, who, “ leaping up, stood and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, leaping, and praising God.” Acts iii. 8. I thought of David, and felt as he did, when he danced before the ark of God with all his might. My soul praised the Lord in adoring gratitude, and I called upon all his works to assist me in glorifying his holy name : “ Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens : praise him in the heights. Praise ye him, all his angels : praise ye him, all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon : praise ye him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heaven of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.” Ps. cxlviii. 1—4.

I thought that God had never shown so much mercy to any one before ; I judged myself to be the chief sinner of the human race, and his mercy appeared to me then so wonderful, and so astonishingly great, that I concluded there must be much joy in heaven over me as a repenting sinner ! The Lord had not to say then, “ My son, give me thine heart ;” it was his, he had taken it (I had almost said) by storm. Christ had made me willing in the day of his power, and

how he rode in triumph through my soul ! The universe, as the handywork of God, claimed my admiration ; but I clearly saw that man's sin had tainted everything earthly. I could now view the world in its true light, and despise its vain and delusive pleasures, which no longer possessed attractions for me ; *that dream was ended*, God had revealed himself as *my Father*, I felt his love in my heart ; he was my all in all ; and I looked up to him as being mine, with exceeding joy. No more wrath, no clouds, no storms, no frowns now ; but all was peace between God and my soul. Jesus was sensibly present with me ; his power and love were great, his smiles gracious, and his sensible embraces of a poor prodigal son were to me a heaven of heavens. O how precious was Jesus then to me !

The Comforter was come, and, dove-like, he sat brooding upon my spirit, and all was communion, love, and peace. I seemed to be brought to another world, where all things were new and delectable. I felt certain of going to heaven, for heaven was opened unto me, and there seemed but a step between my soul and ultimate glory. I loved God's servants and his children, but was raised above the fear of men or devils. The work of God wrought upon my soul was between him and me ; I never submitted it to any man's judgment ; human opinion is of no weight whatever after the *inward powerful testimony* of the *Holy Ghost* : " For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth : and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God : whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another ; though my reins be consumed within me. But ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me ? " Job xix. 25—28.

And once for all, I would solemnly protest before

all men, that I highly prize the *saving power* of the Holy Ghost. A soul indulged with these divine and heaven-sent influences (the effects of which, as a witness for God, I have endeavoured to describe), is raised above everything terrestrial, and while *under that influence* he cannot envy the great their greatness, the rich their riches, kings their crowns, or the children of this world their vanities : he bids this dull earth roll, nor feels her idle whirl ; for

“ Believing, we rejoice
To see the curse remove ;
We bless the Lord with cheerful voice,
And sing his bleeding love.”

That was a night long to be remembered by me ! never, I hope, to be quite forgotten, though, alas, I am prone to overlook the mercies of the Lord in days that are past. I returned home late, but felt it prudent to say nothing to my wife, who was then a Deist, and rendered much circumspection necessary on my part. I could have told her what great things God had done for me,—that I was no longer a distressed sinner, quaking under fears of deserved wrath, but a pardoned, justified soul, walking and talking with God, and in perfect peace with him. But the Lord gave me discretion.

This was the time of my espousals ; it lasted about six months. I was then twenty-five years of age. During all that period I never communicated to a human being what the Lord had done for me ; and before I had exchanged one word with any Christian on the subject of experience, I had written an account of the Lord’s gracious dealings with my soul ; so that no man could say, “it was borrowed.” That manuscript I have by me now. I desire to be thankful to my heavenly Father for thus keeping me from opening my case to any individual until the time of love was over ; had it been otherwise I might have “ fallen among thieves.”

Shortly after what I have related on the night when my soul was delivered, I had two promises given me above all the rest. I received them when in secret communion with God, and with such power and abundant light, savour, and unction, that I felt as happy as I could desire to be on earth: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Jer. xxxi. 3. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Deut. xxxiii. 27. O how precious these promises seemed to my soul! That was to me as the hill Mizar. But I must forbear—I cannot open it!

In those days I used to enjoy several Sabbaths in a week; I termed them the days of the Son of man—they were feast, not fast days, because I was one of the children of the bridechamber, and the Bridegroom was with me. My Sabbaths were Sabbaths indeed: on my way to chapel I had only to put up my petition, when I immediately had the Saviour's presence powerfully with me. I took him into the assembly, and my soul held the King in the galleries. Cant. vii. 5. I was probably the poorest in circumstances in that large congregation; but I felt the richest man there, for, as having nothing I possessed all things: I bore all my treasure along with me, my heart was full of Christ; this was all the treasure I had, and all I wanted. Many passed by me as though it was "Touch me not;" but the King of saints lay in my bosom. Grosvenor-street Chapel was often to me "the house of God and the gate of heaven," and whilst hearing the word there, showers of blessings were poured upon me. The Gospel came not in word only, but in *power*, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. I could often say of Christ, "He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love," (Cant. ii. 4;) and those words of John

were frequently fulfilled, for "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day;" and Christ was often seen by the eye of my faith. At times I was enabled to look back and see that all things had worked together for my good; that the lines had fallen to me in pleasant places, and that I had a goodly heritage.

Although poor in this world I was suitably provided for, and could in those days receive every favour, and every event, as coming from the Lord; I was led to watch the hand of God closely, and to see and acknowledge it in the minutest things. He graciously kept me from idle words and idle thoughts, and sent no crosses but such as he enabled me to take up. He impressed my mind with a deep concern to practise what I knew, and to adorn the doctrine of Christ in all things. The sharp convictions under which I had suffered, had taught me the emptiness of the world, and the danger of sinning, and now the loving-kindness of my best and only friend had drawn me into the footsteps of the flock, and had shown me that the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are paths of peace. With the state of the Church of God or of professors, I was quite unacquainted, and of the tribulations which awaited me in this world I knew nothing: faith I possessed, but of the *trial* of faith, I was wholly ignorant.

I had formed my opinions of Christian people from what I had read in the Acts of the Apostles, and happy in my ignorance on this, and other subjects, I concluded that God's children were at that time as free from the spirit of the world, as holy in their conversation, as harmless and as peaceful as were the primitive saints. I knew that real divine power produces blessed fruits, and I knew nothing of its *decline* in the Church. My anxiety then was about my own vineyard; with the affairs of others I intermeddled little. The Spirit of God had brought me into the book of

Canticles, and I could feelingly say concerning Christ, "My beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies; his left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." The winter of conviction and of revealed wrath was past, the rain was over and gone, the flowers appeared on the earth, and the voice of the turtle was heard in our land. My heart was entranced with a faith's view of his person, and Jesus looked upon me and said, "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee."

If ever I was favoured to walk humbly with God, it was at this period. Christ so shed abroad his love in my heart, that the little flame of my affection burned so high, that I could joyfully have died for him who had died for me. In prayer and in praise, by grace, my soul drew near the Lord; his word was my delight, and my meditation of him was often sweet. More than half of the promises written in the Scriptures were applied with power to my heart, and were attended with light and sweetness to my soul, truly sweeter than the droppings of honey or of the honeycomb. Christ fed me with the kidneys of the wheat, and I drank the pure blood of the grape.

God kept me low in temporal things, and as I imagined that this was the lot of all real Christians, I was thus preserved from those temptations to pride which afterwards came upon me, and kept lowly and simple. I had daily to seek from the hand of God, my temporal as well as my spiritual bread; and I found it good to wait upon, and to rely upon him in every necessity: I have at times been reduced to the borders of want, but the supply never failed in the hour of extremity. I remember once, that during the first three days of one week I had no work, and no prospect of any for some time. I had gone to all my employers, but with no success, and I was sorrowfully taking my road home in a very dejected state of mind,

when the Lord graciously sent these words, (Hab. iii. 17, 18,) "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." These words strengthened me, and I went home solemnly rejoicing in God, trusting in Him, and enjoying his peace. The Lord opened his hand and sent me employment. I still remember the spot where that precious passage came to me; I seemed then almost constantly under the shinings of the Spirit of Christ.

One Sabbath I heard a stranger twice preach from these texts: "I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace to his people and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly," (Ps. lxxxv. 8;) and, "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." Acts xvi. 14. Throughout that day so great was the blessing, that I felt as though I sat at heaven's gate; nor would I have exchanged these solid pleasures for an eternity of what the world calls happiness! I have frequently looked back to that day as the happiest in my life. From the first of my serious reading of the Word of God, I was enabled to receive and enjoy the doctrines of grace, and the preaching of those truths was blessed to my soul: yet, I found but few ministers who were willing to publish them, although Christ himself publicly taught those doctrines, and the Apostles constantly proclaimed them, Paul especially, several of whose epistles had been very much blessed to me.

CHAPTER VI.

JOINS MR. ROBY'S CHURCH.

THE precious season of the day of my espousals was about to draw to a close; as the Lord had given me a little faith in his name, he was about to *try* it. Hitherto I was altogether unacquainted with those severe trials, sharp temptations, and long nights of darkness and desertion, through which some of the Lord's children have to pass. It had never occurred to me that such would ever be my lot; I fully expected, as other simple Christians had done before, always to enjoy the sweet presence of Christ, to walk in his light, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and that grace and peace would be multiplied. I anticipated no change, except such as would arise from an *increase* of these blessings; and, as I was often led to pray for more light, faith, hope, and love, that I might follow the Lord more closely; and as I had not the shadow of a doubt concerning my interest in Christ, so I confidently hoped that my path would, like that of the just, shine more and more unto the perfect day, (Prov. iv. 18,) and that the above graces, with knowledge, power, experience, and all holy fruits, would increase and abound, until I should ultimately arrive in glory.—“I understood as a child, I thought as a child.”

The first serious change of which I was sensible, occurred after hearing Dr. W——, from London. During his discourse he had indulged in some amus-

ing and witty observations, calculated to please the earthly mind. They recurred to me as I was on my way home, and I laughed at the recollection of them. Conscience immediately asked, if I had enjoyed the Lord's presence during this service? and, if I had not, was there not rather cause for sorrow than for merriment? I felt the rebuke instantly, and my heart failed, like one whose comfort was taken away. I returned home sad and sorrowful enough, for until then, since God had first set my soul at liberty, I had never missed the presence of Christ, while hearing the gospel preached. I had occasionally heard without much blessing on the word, but I was always certain to be favoured with the *presence* of my Redeemer: now that he seemed to have withdrawn himself, I felt at a loss to understand the change, and unable to endure the separation. I cried to the Lord Jesus, and implored him to return, never again to quit me, but to remain with me for ever. My prayers, however, appeared unavailing, the comforting power was gone, the pleasant light was receding, the shades of darkness were overspreading my mind, and anxiety and sorrow took the place of joy.

At this crisis I most carefully searched my heart, and my manner of living; yet, whilst I saw that in everything I had sinned, and come short of the glory of God, I could not discover that I had been left to indulge in any known sin; Christ is sovereign in his drawings near, and in his withdrawals. Of this I knew little at that period; and having once enjoyed the bliss of his presence, I felt as though I had lost all that was worth living for when he withdrew. I pined, fretted, mourned after Christ, as a dove mourns for its mate. Occasionally a promise was sent with a little dew upon it; but as *my Beloved came not with it*, the consolation I received melted like snow. In that manner came these words: "I will see you again, and

your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." John xvi. 22. This Scripture somewhat comforted me; but as it here gave an intimation of parting for a season, I knew not how to bear it, for my love to Christ appeared as strong as death. His absence was dreadful to me! My soul yearned hourly after him. "Ye have need of patience," "In patience possess ye your souls," were portions which were applied in my restless state of mind; also, "The kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." "Let patience have her perfect work." Still, I was not pacified.

One Sabbath morning Mr. Roby's text was, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." The words seemed to pierce my soul; no sooner were they uttered than I felt as though my heart was breaking. "Oh," I thought, "what have I lost! how shall I bear my existence! what a burden will life be without *my* Beloved!" Shortly after came these words, "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts." Isa. xxviii. 9. This Scripture eventually yielded me much instruction, but at the time of its coming, it was not very comforting, since it pointed to the loss of my enjoyments. Then followed, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Matt. v. 4. But my language was, "Give me Christ, or else I die." I pulled and struggled, but the dear Lord was the stronger, and he resisted me. My soul seemed to be getting in a worse state than ever; at that time this passage often came: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13. The appellation "beloved," seemed comforting, but the succeeding words excited alarm, especially as I did not understand them. They were followed by 1 Pet. i. 7, 8, "That the trial of your faith, being

much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love, &c." These words came often, and they were made good to me; some light was shed upon their meaning, and also upon the path in which I was being led; but what was meant by the trial of my faith through fire, I was then unable to understand; yet I became more resigned to the divine will, and was enabled to trust myself in the hands of God, hoping that he would make all things work together for my good.

The loss of Christ's gracious presence continued greatly to perplex and try me, and the Scriptures which had been applied, caused me no little surmising and inquiry, for I could not discern their meaning: these were after lessons which I had to learn.

It was the will and purpose of the Almighty in his dealings with me, that the work which he had been carrying on in my soul in secret, should in due time be made manifest to the light; and this was now brought about in the providence of God, contrary to my own inclinations. Hitherto what the Lord had done for me, had been guarded with the strictest silence, not a word of it had fallen from me to any one—unless occasionally to my wife, whose state caused me great anxiety. I had never heard any narration of the soul-changes of others, nor read any except in the Bible, or during my childhood; and consequently knew nothing of Christian experience, but what I knew in my own heart, nor had any one so much as asked me whether I had a soul. It was therefore with great surprise and reserve that I received from a stranger a proposal to introduce me to Mr. Roby. This person was a member at Grosvenor-street Chapel; there he had watched me unperceived, had persuaded himself that I was passing through soul-trials, and having followed me one Sabbath evening, he

at once, in a kind manner, inquired my name, and the history of my case. While I was hesitating to reply, these words came to me at the moment: "Be ready always to give a reason of the hope that is in you," (1 Pet. iii. 15,) and induced me to give him my narration; but I declined his offered introduction. From this, however, there was to be no escape; a summons was sent to me to the vestry, which I obeyed. Mr. Roby, receiving me very kindly, asked me some questions, to which I replied by presenting him with a short account in writing of my Christian experience—written for a different purpose—and I then took my leave.

A venerable deacon, Mr. Hiram Holden, was hereafter sent for the purpose of putting a few questions to me, and to give me the information that I was to be proposed as a candidate for church membership. This matter I determined to leave in the hands of God, and it was finally arranged that at the next monthly meeting, I should be received by the church, which I was most cordially, in the presence of nearly five hundred members. My admission, in the name of them all, was announced by Mr. Roby, who giving me the right hand of fellowship, and using the words of Paul, said in a solemn and very affectionate manner: "The Lord confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. i. 8.

I was thus gradually introduced to several families. The deacons employed me as a visitor of the sick, and teacher in the Adult Sunday School; and the Lord made me useful in the work of comforting, and strengthening several of his weaklings. Many a blessed season we enjoyed together, and often scarcely knew how to part. The memory of several of them is still dear to me.

I received great kindness at this time, both from the minister and from many of his flock; but among

these there was a great difference; to some I felt a strong union, for I saw that they possessed the life, and evidenced the fear of God in all their deportment. In these Christians, experience had produced hope, although this hope was much clouded and obscured by doubts. Some of them were men of a remarkably tender conscience and loving spirit, choice souls. But I never met with one Christian among them all, who was not more or less harassed with doubts and fears. As I was then just beginning to appreciate the value of that jewel, *Assurance* of God's love,—this circumstance greatly astonished me. I had heard the Pastor himself stating at times from the pulpit, that even *he* was not free from these doubts; and yet I am as persuaded of his being a good man as I am of Paul being now in glory; and I believe the Pastor had at that time hundreds of God's saints around him. I also am persuaded that both he and they, were much concerned to walk according to that measure of light and knowledge which God had bestowed upon them; and, for holy walking in the fear of God, I have rarely met with their equals.

My wife's salvation was now my great concern. Long previously to my joining Mr. Roby's Church the Lord had made me useful to her. I had been led to devote many leisure hours in warning her of her state and danger, and in giving her particulars of the Lord's work upon my soul; in expounding to her the Scriptures, and in prayer for her. She had observed the great change in me, and was much impressed with the conviction that the work was genuine; and that there *must* be a *reality* in the religion of Jesus Christ—a religion which she had hitherto despised and rejected.

The good work of grace was commenced in her soul, and she had heard Mr. Roby, whose labours had been useful to her, for some time. In that very chapel, in answer to my soul-distress for her, she had been brought into the liberty of the gospel, and been intro-

duced to the church, and joyfully received by them. To me she became a blessed helpmeet—a true yoke-fellow: but as I intend to give hereafter, if I am spared, some accounts of the Lord's dealings with her, I shall proceed with my own narrative. Yet I would here praise the name of the Lord for taking two of a family, and bringing us to Zion.

Our cases, as being converted from a state of infidelity, excited considerable attention; and the Lord raised up for us many religious acquaintances and some warm and affectionate friends. But it is now time to give some account of my temporal concerns and means of subsistence during this period. Although the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord—yet I believe that he, at times, hears the cry of his own children for temporal things, even when they are dead in trespasses and sins; so it had been with me. The hand of God in his providence has been visibly displayed towards me on many occasions, and even while I was as ignorant as a heathen of the true God. One of these occurred during what was called a very hard time in the trade: money or food we had none, and no prospect of procuring any. In this state I endeavoured to call in secret upon the Creator to send us supplies, or we must perish for want. Not long after my prayer was finished, my wife entered the room with a large basket full of provisions; I could not imagine how or whence the relief came, for I was then a Deist.

But when God had called me by his Grace he soon taught me to live upon his providence. Work was then very scarce, and obtained with great difficulty; more than a hundred tradespeople would be seen crowding around the warehouseman, begging for employment, like the poor for bread in a time of scarcity. But I had been taught a better way—to stand back and lift up a silent prayer to Jehovah. Often would the warehouseman call out my name, and my work be thrown to me over the heads of the

CHAPTER VII.

[1818.]

CALL TO THE MINISTRY.

WHILE I was one day in my room, pursuing my usual study of the Scriptures, I was filled with astonishment by the powerful application of the 18th and 19th verses of the 4th chapter of Luke: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

This was to me a singular and unlooked-for visitation. No thought, nor even desire for the ministry had crossed my mind since I had known the Lord. But with that passage, a deep solemnity fell upon my spirit. I knew that the words primarily belonged to Christ, but now they impressed me with the conviction, that the Lord had then and there anointed and separated me to that sacred work; and there was such a power upon my soul, as made me wholly willing. Yet, as I pursued my meditations, the magnitude and solemnity of the work, and my own unfitness and disqualifications were so set before me, that I fell upon my knees by the bedside, and there poured out my heart before the Lord, and opened the whole affair to him. I was favoured with a solemn season in prayer; I begged of Him not to suffer me to be deceived, but to grant me---if it were really his will that I should

go—some further direction. No answer was sent at that time; but the conviction that I was to be sent out remained firm and unwavering. Yet I desired another word with power, in confirmation of the former; and for this I waited at the Throne. At the end of nine or ten days my request was granted, and the following passage was sent: "They that be wise (margin, "teachers,") shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Dan. xii. 3. Both this Scripture and the former, being sent to my soul, not with ordinary, but with *great*, manifest, and overwhelming *power*, I could no longer entertain a doubt on the subject. My call to the ministry was as evident, as distinct, and as clear as my call by grace; they must stand or fall together. Those words were the commission which my Captain gave me; they are my credentials; and better than these I do not want.

In deep humiliation of soul, I was led to the throne of grace, where I was enabled devoutly to receive and acknowledge this commission; I fervently adored Him who had counted me worthy; I besought the Lord's counsel, care, and keeping; that he would be with me, to maintain, preserve, and bless me; and, giving myself up to him for the work, in body, soul, and spirit, I entreated him to send down upon me the blessed Teacher to instruct me for the ministry. I said, "Lord, here I am, I yield myself to thee; do with me as seems good in thy sight." And from my inmost heart and soul I added, "Lord, *when* thou wilt—*where* thou wilt—*how* thou wilt—and *as* thou wilt."

I watched the effects of this visitation, and found that it tended rather to humble than to elate. My mind seemed set apart more and more to the service of God, grace teaching me to walk circumspectly in the prospect of the ministry; and the following passage

and to make them white, even to the time of the end : because it is yet for a time appointed." Dan. xi. 35. The pointing of this passage towards a *fall* greatly tried and agitated me : I dreaded being suffered to run into sin, and I earnestly besought the Lord to preserve me. He answered me by these words :—" And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat : but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not : and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Luke xxii. 31, 32. There was certainly a portion of comfort in the passage ; but the bearing of the whole tended rather to augment than to allay my anxiety and alarm.

Satan's sieve is Christ's academy of *self-knowledge*, where our Lord prepares his instruments for the work of the ministry. That passage was followed by these words :—" Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time : casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant ; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour : whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." 1 Pet. v. 6—9. The application of the three last-mentioned passages was a most important part of my experience. These Scriptures were alternately a source of affliction and of consolation, for twenty years after ; nor do I think that I have *yet done* with them.

It was towards the close of the year 1816 that the "time of love" ended with my soul, and I gradually sunk into a state of darkness and distress. During this period of trouble, the enemy suddenly hurled a shower of fiery darts, and grievously wounded and harassed me : he assailed my faith in the Holy Trinity, by so confusing my ideas, and bewildering my judg-

ment with sophistries, that I neither knew to whom I had prayed, nor what I had been saying! When I addressed the Father, he suggested that I should pray to Christ; when I directed my prayer to Jesus Christ, "this was improper," I must address the Spirit; when I addressed the Spirit, that also was found fault with: so that by the stratagems of this evil one, it seemed as though I could never address the right Person. The truth was finally opened to me in this way: pray to the Father in the name of, and with faith in the Son, by the Spirit's help, and then you will rightly serve the Holy Trinity. Moreover, the Spirit showed me clearly, that these three equal Persons were one and the same in the divine nature or essence; and that if my faith sweetly embraced this truth, if I directly worshipped any one of these Persons in Jehovah, I thereby worshipped all the three; and that, with this faith, I had a right to call upon any one Divine Person as my necessities might require. The same Spirit also taught me, that there were three that bear record in heaven, and that it was the height of my privilege to worship all the three equally,—a Trinity of persons in the Unity of the divine substance, essence, or nature. Thus all true Christians adore Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity. Let the wise ones of the world laugh at this: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him."

When this foundation truth was clearly revealed to me, how thankful did I feel, and what satisfaction and joy did it bring! But the enemy had another temptation at hand—respecting the person of Christ; and he suggested, that since Jehovah the Word, as God, had taken the human nature into union with the divine, the human nature had thereby become divine, and must be worshipped as such; he artfully pointed to the language of Paul in 2 Cor. v. 16, as intending to

imply this : “ Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more ;” and quoting also Dr. Watts, “ Hail, great Immanuel, *all* divine,” he added, “ You see that Christ is now divinity, and nothing else.” This temptation greatly distressed me ; I became much confused, and my mind was filled with darkness and horror : but the Spirit of God, in answer to my secret groanings, showed me that “ a *man* was to be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest,” (Isa. xxxii. 2 ;) that the divine nature of Christ was not turned into humanity, nor his humanity into Deity ; that his two natures remained in him distinct,—united, but not mixed together. He is as really man now, as he is verily God ; “ God manifest in the flesh ” is the great mystery of godliness. From that moment, by the eye of faith, I saw the glorious God-man shine forth in his own splendour and glories, as Jehovah, and in his own beauties as man : and many a time since then have I rejoiced to hide beneath the shadow of that Rock.

Such temptations as these, with the Spirit’s teaching underneath them, are very valuable ; to me they were especially so. I am fully persuaded that all the malice and rage of hell are directed against the Lord’s Christ, his Sonship, his person, his work, his truth, and his people. But let Satan try his utmost, this Son of God is that rock against which the gates of hell shall never prevail.

The next temptation which befel me, was upon the subject of the doctrines of Grace—in which, one after another, my faith was assailed. But the adversary here obtained no advantage ; for though I learned much of my own weakness, yet Christ therein made his strength perfect. These doctrines I saw to be not deducible from one or two dark and obscure passages of Holy Writ, but written throughout—as with a sunbeam—and pervading the whole of the

sacred volume. They remained graven on the tablet of my heart for ever. These temptations were salutary to me, and I came out of them triumphing in the Lord. Yet, I was but a raw soldier, for, happy in the consciousness of possessing the blessed truths on which the enemy had assailed me, I imagined that he had done his worst, and bade him defiance. How little did I then know of his malice, devices, and power! my vain boasting cost me no little trouble and sorrow.

CHAPTER VIII.

SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS.

THE next attack was skilfully contrived ; it was directed to a most vulnerable quarter and was successful. Pride is one of the most infernal passions of the human heart. The result of varied experience, both on the bright and on the dark side of the subject, both sweet and bitter, has convinced me that true humility is a most pleasant and healthful grace, whilst pride, accursed pride, is the blight of a Christian. It is of so inflammable a nature as to require but a spark from Satan to ignite it and kindle a vast conflagration. This he effected in me by degrees. " You will make an excellent soldier of Jesus Christ " (was his insinuation). " Surely the Lord must be fitting you for some great work. Already you are taking the lead like the first horse in a race. What blessed confidence you are favoured with, while all your friends are doubting, and fearing, and desponding." These were gilded baits to me, and I swallowed them readily ; they produced their effect. Although I had previously been in the dark for some months, still my soul had been kept alive in self-examination, watching, praying, trusting, hoping, cleaving. But this fresh wound which I received caused Christ to withdraw his power. Pride in spiritual things I believe to be worse than a legion of devils.

The Christian reader will have borne in mind that

warnings of this fall had been given me in the Scriptures that were sent—especially 1 Peter v. 6, 9; but the temptation came not from the quarter whence I was expecting it. It was not now a sudden onset of the devil as a roaring lion: it was not a fall into any outward act of sin, nor was it apparent in my outward deportment; Satan approached me as the beguiling serpent; the pride was inwardly seated in my heart, and it was disguised and hidden even from myself. Yet I fell through this temptation to a great depth, and received a wound from which I was long in recovering.

I was gradually made sensible of its influence by a cold, dry, dull, dead, heavy state stealing over my soul, which I was wholly unable to shake off; yet there was life underneath, and by the aid of a little daily strength I was enabled to struggle against the evils which I could not overcome. But by degrees the inward corruptions of my heart began to be disclosed. Unbelief and hardness of heart; selfishness and pride; a legal spirit and a presumptuous one; fretfulness and rebellion; covetousness and vain imaginations; lust, envy, and blasphemy. In short, the graces and fruits of the Spirit appeared wholly to have fled, or to be buried out of sight, and nothing else could be found but the germ of every evil principle alive and stirring within. This discovery as much surprised as it caused me distress and anguish; for having heard our Christian friends talk only of “the *remains*” of sin, and never of its indwellings and powerful workings, I was wholly at a loss to identify my state with that of a real Christian. Yet as I knew that I was a child of God, the only conclusion left for me was, that I must be the worst of sinners. In my inward soul I was conscious only of the noisome pestilence. Such was the first discovery of self, and it appalled me.

How eagerly did I then listen to the sermons of our pastor for some description of my state; but there was not a vestige of it. I then turned to the hearers. The young men seemed to know nothing about it; the old men little more; except one aged pilgrim, and he was cautious and reserved. I could not make out his case to be half so bad as mine. Driven then from every other refuge, I betook myself to the word of God, and there—though there was but a glimmering of light that shone, I could faintly discover some traces of my path in the Psalms, in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and in Paul's Epistles, especially the 7th chapter to the Romans, and the Epistle to the Galatians, v. 17.

These conflicts, though painful and trying to the flesh, were beneficial; they tended to break the neck of my pride, and make me cry and even roar for deliverance: occasionally there was a respite, and then I fondly imagined that I had seen the worst. But the warfare was not yet over; the following passages came to me: "Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these." Ezek. viii. 15. This was the herald of new and deeper disclosures. Down I went again into the gulf: and before each fresh discovery these words would come: "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly." Prov. xx. 26. This last Scripture was of great use to me, for I had seen these foes, as I supposed, dead for ever, and their resurrection not a little astonished and troubled me. I was, therefore, slow in learning that there are two principles in the believer—flesh and spirit—so as to distinguish accurately between them.

Mr. Hart was here my guide and companion. How feelingly did I enter into those lines of that man of God:—

“ Oh the pangs by Christians felt,
When their eyes are open;
When they see the gulf of guilt
They must wade and grope in.
When the hell appears within,
Causing bitter anguish,
And the loathsome stench of sin
Makes the spirit languish.”

At such moments Satan, like a lion, would come roaring again, What do you think of yourself now? Surely *you* are not much like a Christian? These attacks I could neither parry nor endure; their truth was unanswerable. I turned again to my brethren; in conversation or in prayer I occasionally blundered out a word on the state of my mind, but I found I was not understood, and that with some it even produced estrangement; I did not then know that God was thus secretly preparing me for a strange and sudden turn in my journey of life, which was now close at hand. As a leper, pronounced unclean, and separated from the people, I was again driven by mere necessity to seek for sympathy with the Scripture saints; henceforth they were my companions. I sat with Job among the ashes, and found his society sweet. David also went down into my depths in his psalms—and further still; and poor Jeremiah and I seemed to mingle our tears together. That weeping prophet, in the third of Lamentations, minutely described my case and condition. Paul's seventh of Romans, and his Epistle to the Galatians, I studied frequently; and I was glad to find that my experience, bitter as it was, was still to be found in the Bible. At the same time the following passage was sent to strengthen me: “Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.”

It was thus that God kept fast hold of me, drew me near to himself, and maintained my confidence in him through the bitterness of this trial, so that no

question ever arose concerning my interest in Christ, nor did I anticipate any, while memory should retain her seat. In truth, such sustaining was greatly needed; my brethren were not favoured with the faith of assurance, and had no sympathy with me in the possession of it.

The ministry of the word instead of alleviating only aggravated my misery, and I then was left to stand quite alone. I wanted to have my own trials traced experimentally; I thirsted to have the doctrines of sovereign grace preached boldly, and Christ set forth plainly in his person, righteousness, and blood; to hear the sinner laid low, and the Saviour exalted. Instead of all this our wine was mixed with water, turbid water; we were told every Sabbath that it was the duty of all men to believe and obey the gospel; that the Law was the believer's rule of life; that sanctification was a progressive work; that there would always be "*the remains of sin*" in the believer; but that sin was to be dying a lingering death, and he to be ever growing more holy and heavenly-minded. At these statements I marvelled and could not understand them. One thing, indeed, I could understand, that on each Sabbath we constantly had a good week's work of duties set us, for failing in which, we as regularly had Moses with his rod brought out the Sabbath after. And what was worse, as the fare was lean we were the less able to stand the labour. Many good sayings, it is true, and some precious truths were delivered; the doctrines of grace were held and recognised as gospel, but some of them seemed to me to be brought out very sparingly for fear of their being abused.

However, in conformity with the minister's statements, I laboured hard at the "progressive work," but the greater was my toil, the worse I felt myself to be; my efforts to rise, as they became more vehement, only

sunk me lower ; I gained not one step : yet as others heard the preacher profitably, I blamed only myself. But my confidence in him was to be shaken ; the time of deliverance was approaching.

On one occasion he took for his text Rom. viii. 15, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!"

I was fully persuaded that I had gone through the experience of that text, and was made practically acquainted with its meaning ; I therefore resolved to observe whether the minister understood his subject. To my surprise he did not, like a good workman, separate the two spirits, and keep them apart and distinct—assigning to each its own character and tracing its operations, but entirely confounded them, and gave no definition of either. From this moment misgivings arose in my mind, and I henceforth brought to the touchstone of the written Word, the testimony that was delivered from the pulpit ; and, like the Bereans of old, searched the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.

This state of things lasted about three years ; during all which period the ministry at Grosvenor-street Chapel, so far from benefiting, was only more and more alienating me. My Sabbaths, which had been days of the Son of Man to me, had become miserable. The house of God had been my delight, now I always quitted it fretful and peevish—even if I had entered the place with some degree of comfort. Yet sweet support was vouchsafed, the world continued to me as nothing ; and I often retired for solemn self-examination, reading, and prayer, and therein found some enlargement, though never complete deliverance.

CHAPTER IX.

[1820.]

SCHEME OF ACADEMICAL EDUCATION FRUSTRATED — HEARS MR. G——Y PREACH—JOINS HIS CHURCH—TRIAL IN PARTING WITH MR. ROBY.

MEANWHILE, Mr. Roby (who was ignorant of these trials of my mind) had taken a kind interest in me ; already he had published a portion of my early history, with remarks of his own. The title of the book was, “The Converted Atheist, or the Early History of ——, edited by William Roby.” He had had, besides, an impression that I might ultimately be called to the ministry ; and having elicited from me my exercises of mind on this subject, he gave me some instruction in grammar and composition ; and then sent me out on Sabbaths to speak at Bamford Hall, Oldham, Pendlebury, and Hulme. I had previously spoken several times at a private house, at the request of some of the younger members of the church.

Mr. Roby having been confirmed in his impression, now proposed to me to go through a regular course of instruction for the ministerial office at an Institution at Blackburn ; and during my stay there to leave my wife and two children to be maintained at home by the friends at Grosvenor-street, many of whom were wealthy and extremely liberal. To this proposal I acceded. Mr. Roby’s word, as everybody knew, was his bond, and the plan was fully arranged ; I only awaited the formal appointment of the Committee at

Blackburn to take my departure. It is due to the memory of Mr. Roby to say, that he acted in this affair as one of the best friends that ever were raised up for me. His act was entirely unsolicited and unsought, and the intention was one of extraordinary kindness.

Meanwhile my state of bondage continued; the preaching was a greater trial than ever, but I resolved to bear with it, both because the time was short, and the new plan might prove to be a remarkable and merciful providence. But the Lord's ways are not as man's ways; a singular dispensation suddenly overturned the whole scheme.

The Sabbath following my last interview with Mr. Roby was Ordinance day. My harass and distress under the word had increased, but I attended the commemoration of the Lord's Supper, and then it became almost distracting. I looked round on the five hundred members; they all seemed more or less peaceful and happy, while I, unable to find my Lord, was scarcely able to bear the weight of my trials. I was in darkness, desertion, and as though in the belly of hell. At this point a thought rushed into my mind—"Go and hear G——y." I instantly rejected the suggestion: but again it returned—"Go and hear G——y! Go and hear G——y!" Against Mr. G——y I entertained strong and deeply-rooted prejudices, imbibed in childhood. My father had published a book against him, and all my relations and friends, more or less, denounced him as an Antinomian.

After a great conflict in my mind, some attempt to pray, and much terror that I was doing wrong, I decided to go to his Chapel the same Sabbath evening. But, arrived there, fear and shame drove me past the door; I dreaded lest he might be a licentious character. To be brief, I at last entered the chapel, and took my stand on the gallery stairs, where I could

hear every word, without being seen, and could easily make my escape if needful. The minister was then about to commence the prayer. No sooner had he begun than my prejudices gave way. I had never before heard any man that did so thoroughly enter into my case and feelings, or with whom I could so cordially unite in petitioning. His prayer was to me like a glass of wine to a fainting soul, and at the conclusion of it I felt compelled to go where I should be able to get sight of him. A young acquaintance of mine drew me into his pew in front of the gallery, and I found myself to be directly facing Mr. G——y. I looked up to the Lord in prayer to hold me fast, to keep me from falling, and to show me whether or not the true Gospel of Christ was preached in that chapel. I was, therefore, both a serious and an attentive hearer. My eyes were riveted upon the preacher as he read his text, which was from 2 Cor. i. 18, "But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay." Every word of the text went through me. He first undertook to show what was meant by a *Yea* and *Nay* Gospel; and in a very short time he had picked the bones of Arminianism. "You hate Arminianism," said I, mentally; "so do I—so far agreed!" He then took in hand what he called the "*Modern Gospel*," and proceeded to dissect and demolish that—a work in which I followed him with tears in my eyes and breathless with interest. To my astonishment I recognised in his description the very gospel which, for three years, had caused me so much suffering! all its varieties, indistinctness, confusion, and bewilderment, he portrayed as though he had been hearing it for years; and he wound up by saying—"And now I will tell you how it is with a poor, tried, hobbling child of God who sits under it." And then he entered in detail upon the experience, the trials, and

the conflicts of the individual under the "Yea and Nay" word, until I felt that he had not only minutely described my case, but that he had actually turned me inside out!—a work which had never been done by man before. And he finished this part of his discourse by saying—"And when the ladies and gentlemen came out from the preaching they would look as pretty as pretty could be; and say to the poor hobbling soul—'Well, how did you like the discourse? Wasn't it excellent?' while the poor soul would be ready to drive them all before him." Thought I, "That's true! for I have been near there, many a time."

And now he proceeded, in a very solemn manner, to declare the Gospel of God, and I judged that I had never before listened to a *full Gospel sermon*; it appeared to me, indeed, to be God's Gospel—sweet and new—so plainly, so boldly, so forcibly preached; and I believe I may add, sent with such power, light, unction, and peace to my soul, that I was quite set free: my prejudices were dispelled and forgotten. During the last hymn, my heart clung to the man in the pulpit, and my eyes wept over him. "This," I mentally ejaculated, "*this*, verily, is the Lord's clumsy workman! The man is uneducated; yet in one hour has he anatomized Arminianism; arraigned, tried, and passed sentence on an Andrew Fuller's gospel; he has told me all my heart, and preached the Gospel of God in such a way as I never yet heard it." Upon this, these words came to me: "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise," (1 Cor. i. 27;) and, "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen." Job xxviii. 7. I went home with some brokenness of spirit, and altogether like another man; and I at once made up my mind to return. In coming to this conclusion, I had to go in opposition to the feelings and opinions of every relative and friend I had in the

world—to relinquish my prospects of instruction for the ministry at Blackburn—to risk losing the favour of a gentleman from whom, as before mentioned, I had constant employment (and who was an Independent); and, what I think cost me infinitely more than all, to appear acting an ungrateful part towards Mr. Roby, who had all along been a kind and true friend to me. The sacrifice was not made lightly: I felt these things most sensibly. But the love of Christ outweighed them all, and I gave them up at once, and became a hearer of Mr. G——y, at St. George's Road.

I might here say much concerning my attachment to this servant of Christ; but taking all things into consideration, perhaps it may be wise to remember that St. Paul says, "Let him that glorieth glory in the Lord."

I went once more to take leave, as it were, of my spiritual birthplace. I then wrote to Mr. Roby, informing him whose ministry I had begun to attend; signified my intention to withdraw from the church; and after expressing my gratitude for all his kindness, I took an affectionate leave of him. It was no easy thing to me to part with such a man! and I did not write that letter without much emotion.

I consider that Mr. Roby was not a minister endued with strong faith; he was not permitted to wear that precious jewel—assurance of God's love, or privileged with that rich communion with Christ which makes a ministry rich and unctuous. Though he had never gone down into those depths which serve to purge a man's ministry altogether from fleshly exhortations, &c., I believe that there was a work of God upon his soul; he was clear respecting the justification of a sinner, and knew a little of the doctrines of grace; perhaps he had never been brought very low, or lifted very high in experience—seldom raised above hope—sometimes perplexed with fears.

Yet many of the weak in the faith heard him with great satisfaction; and certainly he could not go higher or deeper than he had been led; therefore making every suitable allowance, I must say that I never saw a man in whom the grace of God shone brighter; and I believe that grace made him faithful to the light which God had given him. In the pulpit his language was plain, his manner earnest and fervent, yet withal animated and interesting. The salvation of souls was his most anxious concern. Such a pattern of steady, ardent zeal, and diligent perseverance, I never saw. As to the matter of his sermons, Mr. Roby made no display of his learning: he was no light, vain preacher, but according to his knowledge, singularly grave and weighty. There certainly was the true life in his ministry, and he was favoured to be instrumental in the conversion of many hundreds of souls to Jesus Christ. I do not mean to imply that all who joined his church were real Christians, although I hope that very many were so. In his private life and conversation, the grace of God shone conspicuously; he was as grave and weighty there, as in the pulpit; and, ever mindful of the interests of the sick and poor of his flock, he abounded in secret liberality. His hearers usually amounted to nearly two thousand, and his church consisted of about five hundred members. Over these Mr. Roby was a most careful, steady, and affectionate pastor, and never so happy, or at home, as when in the midst of his flock. He appeared to have no desire for distinction as a travelling popular preacher—he was the home pastor. Although I am confident that whatever Mr. Roby was as a good man, he was by the grace of God alone, yet my own opinion is that he left behind him few equals; and although it was not the will of God that I should continue to profit by his ministry, yet I shall ever retain a high esteem for him, of whom I may truly say, “The memory of the

just is blessed." If there be any real Christian in the district where this pastor laboured who does not love the man, and esteem his memory, I would tell that Christian, that he never knew Mr. Roby. Let God have all the glory; he is gone to his rest.

I had no sooner begun to attend the ministry in St. George's-road, than the enemy, and indwelling sin, caused me much trouble. I usually entered the place each Sabbath morning with the consciousness of being a leprous soul; yet, the good Samaritan would often visit me. Under the preached word there, I thus received profit, instruction, and comfort. At the end of six months I offered myself to the church, and being received by them, I was, in December, 1820, baptized by Mr. G——y, and sat down at the Lord's table.

CHAPTER X.

[1821.]

SENT OUT TO PREACH IN VILLAGES—MOUTH CLOSED—GOES TO
BIRMINGHAM—GODMANCHESTER.

It was in the month of January, 1821, a few weeks after I had been admitted into the church at St. George's-road Chapel, and in the seventh month of my attendance there, (being the only period in my life, before or since, that I ever had the benefit of hearing Mr. G——y,) that it pleased God to begin to accomplish his word, in calling me to the ministry. Monthly church meetings were held at the chapel for prayer and preaching, these were attended by the deacons, but the pastor was never present and did not interfere.

On one of these occasions, the deacons with no little difficulty brought me forward, and I spoke with fear and trembling from Rom. v. 11, "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." The testimony of the brethren to this my first attempt among them, was encouraging, and especially of one, William Derbyshire, an old disciple, who drew me aside and said: "Now don't you be afraid, for I believe you are as surely sent of God to preach, as ever our dear minister was." Many of the brethren behaved to me with great kindness, and seemed to have no more doubt of my being the Lord's sent servant, than our venerable friend had. I was

compelled to speak at the monthly meetings, to preach at the neighbouring country villages on the Sabbath ; and at the end of three months I received the following commission from the deacons :—

“Our brother and the brethren of the churches which you have served for several months, have heard you profitably, and they believe you are sent of God to preach ; and they hereby as a church give you their authority to go and preach the Gospel of Christ, wherever He may be pleased to call you, wishing you grace, mercy, and peace !” But all this time I was far from satisfied ; I did not entertain the slightest doubt of my having been anointed of God to preach, but my fear was that my friends were urging me to go too precipitately, and before the appointed time, and I always went with reluctance. My fears were confirmed by a text which was sent to me : “Tarry at Jerusalem until ye be endued with the Spirit from on high.” The result proved that I was right ; I had yet a sharp lesson to learn of God’s method of sending out his ministers.

Late one Saturday evening, I received a visit from two friends requesting me to preach at Royton on the next day ; from the conviction that my time was not yet come, I had an inconceivable repugnance to go, and as they continued to press the point more urgently, I opposed it the more stoutly. At length after a contest which lasted some hours, I was forced to yield.

During that night I did not close my eyes, and at half-past six on the following morning, I set out on foot to Royton, a distance of nine miles, in great uneasiness and trouble. As I went these words accompanied me : “For ye are bought with a price : therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” 1 Cor. vi. 20. They furnished me a subject of meditation, and I sensibly felt that I could either open or shut my mouth as He

pleased : I dreaded the latter alternative. I arrived at the chapel, service began, and I engaged in prayer, and felt my soul much drawn out. I then commenced speaking, but in less than five minutes a dark cloud came over my mind, and God so shut me up that I was unable to utter another word ! Greatly distressed and at a loss what to do, I explained my case to the people, and begged them to convert the service into a prayer-meeting : this they refused to do. An old gentleman then rose and endeavoured to encourage me ; with much kindness he stated that he had heard me feelingly in prayer, and suggested that I should wait a few moments ; that the dispensation might probably be designed as a lesson as much for themselves as for me. I assured my amiable friend that my preaching was effectually stopped, but I would endeavour to give them a short account of the Lord's dealings with my soul from my conversion, which might convince them that I was not venturing unsent into the ministry. After my narration we concluded with singing and prayer. Thus ended that memorable service, but not my anguish. Who shall attempt to describe the distress of a soul that God has thus put publicly to silence !

The Lord had effectually brought down my spirit, and I could have wept in bitterness. Breaking forcibly away from the friends, and without tasting food, I set off homewards at a rapid pace, these words coming at every third or fourth step with weight upon my mind : "*Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.*" Zech. iv. 6. Never did I learn more of the power of God in so short a time as I did that day. From this moment I became convinced that I possessed no natural gifts for preaching ; and that my lips would never be opened for God, but by God himself. I considered that for the present, at least, I had done with preaching, and that

my business was to weigh well the passage, "Tarry at Jerusalem," and decline all invitations until a holy anointing should fall upon me. But my resolutions were destined again to give way. After the interval of a single Sabbath, my brethren again proved stronger than I, and sent me to preach at Bolton. The people there were poor, but a lively and fervent, praying people. I took the same text as at Royton: "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." I went in great terror lest my mouth should again be closed, and was much harassed by the enemy while speaking, so much so, that I could only conceal the trembling of my limbs by placing my feet firmly against the pulpit, and grasping the sides. At the conclusion of the service I tried to steal out unobserved, not conceiving it possible that the people could have heard me with any profit; but I was deceived. One of them seized my arm, and with tears in his eyes, said, "My friend, the Lord has been with us this morning." By this time other friends joined us; I was astonished to witness the effect of the Lord's power. He had so shed His Spirit upon the people, that there was scarcely a dry eye to be seen; they wept and rejoiced together by turns. This was an explanation of those words, "Death worketh in us, and life in you;" and also, "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." 1 Cor. ii. 4. In the afternoon I finished my text, and the people seemed to hear with the same blessing, so that I went home rejoicing in their joy, though to me it had been a day of suffering. I was thus led into both branches of the text that had followed me, "Not by might, but by my Spirit." Yet this was not the last time that I had to pass through this humiliation. At the vestry of Mr. G——'s Chapel, I was once, at the end of half an

hour, suddenly arrested in my discourse. Mr. Greenhough, the deacon, finished the subject for me, while I could only lay down my head, and hide my face in my hands. But God never again shut my mouth in preaching, though I often dreaded that trial. Such discipline is needful to show the feeble instrument wherein his great strength lieth. It is a sharp remedy administered for the cure of pride, and no man who has once felt it, will wish for a second application.

The brethren, George Greenhough, Craycroft, Merryweather, Owen Richard, Mr. Horsefall, and W. Derbyshire, four of whom were deacons at St. George's-road, were the principal persons who sent me out to preach. The pastor took no part in it whatever. For twelve months I preached at Middleton, Royton, Stockport, Bolton, Alkingham, Blackburn, and other places, and in Mr. G——y's pulpit two evenings in the week.

After the painful trials just narrated, it pleased God to give me a seal to my ministry, the first which I had had for my hire, with the exception of my wife. I had been introduced to, and had some conversation with a person who was in legal bondage, and on a succeeding Sabbath, as I was preaching from Psalm cxlvi. 7, "The Lord looseth the prisoners," the Lord sweetly and fully set her soul at liberty during the sermon, so that she was filled with holy joy and triumph. She became afterwards united to the church at Bolton, and has ever since been well reported of to me as a steady consistent Christian.

At the end of a twelvemonth thus passed in the towns and villages near Manchester, my invitations were extended to greater distances and longer periods. The first of these was a call to supply among a portion of the late Mr. Fowler's congregation, meeting in Hall-street, Birmingham. The prospect of this visit was a trial to me, and on the first Sabbath, as I entered

the pulpit and looked round on the assemblage of fine ladies and gentlemen, I came to the conclusion that such a plain countryman could be of little use to a people who probably knew nothing of tribulation. I gave out my text, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Is. xlv. 22. The Lord soon took from me all fear of man, and I felt only as in his presence; and not only so, but he blessed the word and gave it entrance among them. After the service, as I reached the foot of the pulpit stairs, a gentleman met me, saying, "*This is in the Spirit.* Alas! we have lately had it *in the letter.*" And in this fashionable assembly—as it had appeared to me—I was not only very warmly received by the friends generally, but I was, like Apollos of old, to meet with a Priscilla to expound unto me the way of God more perfectly. Such was the late Mrs. Hipwood, a wise, sober, experimental, advanced, and judicious Christian; the glory of God shone upon her conversation. She cordially received me. "You have this night," said she, "been thoroughly made manifest in my conscience as being sent of God, and I could go through the world with you." Being invited to meet her next day at the house of her son-in-law, she there requested me to relate the dealings of God with my soul, and the manner of my call to the ministry, and listened to them as a mother in Israel with solemn pleasure: then taking up my history, she explained many parts of my experience which had never been interpreted to me; she also related her own, and opened one Scripture after another as if she had been a minister of Jesus Christ. She had been favoured to be a hearer of Romaine, Bradford, Huntington, and Fowler; and I have rarely met her equal. But she was a shock of corn fully ripe, and the Lord soon took her to himself. Sweet is the memory of such saints.

With many others there I formed a union which will never be forgotten whilst I am in the body. They sent me home laden with supplies for my family.

In these my first ministerial visits, God sent me out in much poverty,—often with scarcely a shilling. This was needful for one who was anointed to preach the Gospel to the poor. These words have often touched my heart, “When I sent you without purse or scrip, lacked ye anything?” With the disciples I could always answer, and to the honour of God I can now say, “Nothing, Lord.” Even my parson’s suit and a great-coat were supplied to me during the very first year of my preaching, through the liberality of Mr. Greenhough, who without consulting me at all on the subject, took me to a tailor to be measured, and upon my remonstrating at such an expense, and urging that I had a suit of coloured clothes, “Thou shalt have a good new suit of clothes, man,” said he; “I know you will need a warm suit to cross those cold moors, especially if it is a hard winter.” “But where is the money to come from?” “Never you mind, but take the clothes from the hand of Providence, and be thankful.” Thus my gracious Lord equipped me for the long rides and walks in his service.

During the first twenty years that I was in the ministry I never bought a suit of clothes out of my salary; either they were presented to me, or money was sent by friends (and always from a distance). When my clothes began to look shabby I went to my Lord: he usually suffered me to wait awhile to quicken me in prayer, and to show my state of dependence upon him; but he invariably appeared for me. At this time the Lord’s children were well-pleased to see their young preacher in his parsonic attire. Many a groaning season and many a blessed season in prayer I had upon those hills; but I have

bid them a long, perhaps a final adieu. I am one of those fond fools, I confess, to whom early scenes and early associations are dear.

But as my visits became more distant, and my absence from home prolonged, my affairs began to suffer: with this anxiety I had also the pain of long separations from my family, and the trials peculiar to the work as a minister. It was in this state of things that I accepted an invitation to Godmanchester, Hunts., for four weeks. Mr. James Martin, "the squire," was to be my host. I arrived at his house with eighteen-pence in my pocket. To the burden of my cares was added the painful reality of finding myself in the midst of a strange place and people—170 miles away from my wife and family, and without any means of getting back to them if the people should not receive my testimony on the ensuing Sabbath. Oppressed with these and the like reflections, I sat at table in such evident and silent dejection that the Squire inquired the cause. I was unwilling to disclose the whole case, and replied that I was often depressed in the prospect of preaching. "Oh, indeed," said he, hastily, "that is a very bad sign. The Lord's ministers take great delight in their work. I should fear that you were *not sent of God*. I wonder the Manchester friends should have sent you here." After this discouraging speech he took up the subject and talked for an hour, and his language and fluency certainly impressed me with the idea that he was much more competent to preach than I was.

Next morning, perceiving that my depression continued, he proposed a walk, and directed me to the chapel. Thither I went in no pleasant mood. In large letters over the door was displayed, "Particular Baptist Chapel." "*Particular* enough, no doubt," said I. In the chapel-yard was the grave of the late

pastor and his sister. I read the inscription: "These both died in the full assurance of their sovereign relation in grace, ratified by the blood of Jesus Christ, and applied by the Holy Spirit." "Well," thought I, "these people certainly are highflyers;" and at the thought of preaching to such hearers, a rebellion as terrible as Jonah's seized me, and I hastily uttered the wish that the chapel might be burnt down before the morning. This horrible fit remained upon me until the next day, which was the Sabbath. I followed the Squire to chapel at some yards' distance, conceiving that my dread of him equalled his suspicion of me.

A kind and merciful Lord, however, broke in upon my soul soon after I had read my text, and losing all fear of man and all desire of their favour, I cut up notional religion root and branch; and having brought them to the test and standard of vital principles, told them roundly that such of them as were not personally acquainted with these were as "dead as door-nails." Having thus delivered my conscience I sat down, caring little if they sent me back the next day. I waited in the pulpit till the congregation had all dispersed; but at the door of the chapel was a large party awaiting me, who to my surprise greeted me warmly, shook hands, smiled, and looked well-pleased. The Squire himself drew my arm within his own, and when out of hearing said, "My dear good man, I have heard you well this morning. On Friday night you made me believe you could not preach at all. I hope you don't think I like a great swelled-headed professor? No, I love a simple child of God in my heart: come along, come along." And when we entered the house he held out his hand and said, "Here's my hand, my house, and my heart; you are right welcome to all that is here; make yourself quite at home, and if anything comes to table that you

don't like, say so, and you shall not have it again." Mr. Martin was as good as his word in all things. We had many pleasant hours together, and often corresponded; he continued to be a warm friend till his death.

I found a sweet union of soul to many of the Godmanchester friends during that month, among whom I may mention Mr. G. Stocker, Mr. E. Rowell, and Mr. J. Toller. With the last-named friend I have enjoyed many pleasant walks over his farm, and conversing with him upon what we had felt of God and of his word. Thus, a second time, the visit which had commenced so unpromisingly ended with many mercies.

CHAPTER XI.

[1822.]

GIVES UP WORLDLY CALLING—GOES TO MARKET-DRAYTON—IS CHOSEN PASTOR—WIFE AND FAMILY JOIN HIM, APRIL 1822.

SCARCELY had I returned home again to my wife and children, when another engagement was made for me by Mr. Greenhough. By this time my affairs at home were in such a state as to require my immediate attention and decision. For this I sought direction of the Lord, and set apart a special time for prayer on the subject. He answered me with these words, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." 2 Tim. ii. 4. Having received this warrant to abandon my lawful calling, I relinquished it to live henceforth on the things of the altar. Thus relieved from the cares of worldly business, I hastened to fulfil my new engagement, which was to serve the church at Market Drayton, Shropshire, for four weeks; but I was again to go forth in weeping, temptation, and perplexity, though not unmixed with strong consolations. On the eve of my departure, my wife was suddenly taken ill. The disorder was a serious one, being an inflammation in the head and eyes. As it increased during the evening, I deliberated whether to go or stay, and passed several sleepless hours in suspense. At four o'clock in the morning I rose, my wife being by that

time quite blinded by the attack, and on my knees spread the case before the Lord. The answer seemed to be, "Go," and my dear wife, moreover, ill as she was, urged my departure. I set off to the coach which was to take me to Newcastle-under-Lyne, and where a horse would be waiting to carry me to Oakley Mills. I had suppressed my feelings until I reached the threshold of my door, when the thought of leaving my poor wife, blind and helpless, with her infant children, so overcame me that I burst into tears. The Lord then sent this passage to my heart with great power: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Ps. cxxvi. 6. The comfort and support of these words strengthened me to cast my dear wife and children upon God, and believe that all would yet be well; and during the rest of my journey to Newcastle I was favoured with a most blessed season of prayer and communion with God. In this frame I reached Oakley Mills in the afternoon. Mr. and Mrs. Riley received me most kindly and hospitably.

The next morning was the Sabbath. My host conducted me through a beautiful grove to Market Drayton, where I was to deliver my first sermon. My comforts of yesterday had by this time vanished, and a sharp temptation of the enemy beset me; my troubles all returned afresh, and the rebellion of the heart was stirred up; I felt completely shut up in spirit, and anticipated nothing less than to be put to silence before the people. My life at this moment seemed too miserable to be endured, and I hastily wished it might be taken from me. Nothing could be more hateful and unjustifiable than this rebellion in the sight of God. He had an absolute right to do with me as he pleased, and my lips were his and not my own, either to shut or to open. In this state I

entered the chapel at Drayton for the first time: a spot where it had been ordained, though I knew it not, that I was to receive my first charge as a settled pastor in the ministry, and where I was to experience greater power, sweetness, and comfort in the pulpit than had hitherto been bestowed upon me. On that Sabbath I had entered the chapel without a text, though three sermons were expected from me that day. The second hymn was being concluded, and utterly at a loss for a subject, I opened the Bible at hazard. My eye fell upon Ephes. i. 4. "According as he hath chosen us in him, &c." I read these words, though I had never preached from them before, and as I was giving out the text the second time, three distinct heads or divisions of the subject presented themselves to my mind. This was all I had to begin with. But in a moment the Lord broke into my soul, set me at liberty, and favoured me with such power, light, unction, and sweetness, that I rejoiced in God, and my soul was filled with his power and presence, and I preached for an hour and a quarter. "Mr. Blackstock," said one of the deacons, (Mr. Sambrook, a man of as kind and tender a heart as I ever met with, though somewhat peculiar in manner,) "you have kept us just one quarter of an hour too long;" but he added, "it was an excellent discourse. That sermon was studied, and well studied too." The reader, who is in the secret, will have perceived how much study had been bestowed upon it. My kind friend, Mr. Sambrook, at that time knew but little of the manner in which the Lord leads his ministers.

On that, and on the following Sabbath, I had the sweetest and most powerful, as well as comfortable times that I had ever felt, and the people generally were very friendly and very kind in their manner.

The account of these visits at the outset of my

career may seem to some homely, and to many perhaps even prolix and tedious; but to others who are acquainted with the way in which the Lord leads his ministers, I trust these minute details will not be altogether unacceptable: they serve to show that God sent me to preach the gospel in a state of complete dependence upon himself. Yet let it not be inferred from the incident at Drayton, that I therefore neglected the duty of studying for the work. Learning, indeed, and knowledge of the original languages of the Bible, I possessed none; and it has often been a matter of regret to me that I had entertained a prejudice against it; for though it is liable to be much abused, yet, by the grace of God, learning may be rightly used as an handmaid to Faith. Ministers are not apostles of Christ. For my own part, during my first three years in the ministry I possessed no books but a Bible, without commentary, notes, or references; two or three hymn-books, and a pamphlet. Yet with these, had I been favoured with diligence in reading the word and prayer, I might have grown and increased.

A young servant of Christ will do well to read much the word of God, to pray over it, to compare his own experience with it, to search it deeply, and to compare Scripture with Scripture, and spiritual things with spiritual. Those of God's ministers who have taken a lesson from the bee, have most excelled. In sunshine she leaves the hive, hastens among the flowers, gathers her honey, and at night returns laden to her hive! Young servant of Jesus Christ! let the Scriptures be thy field, or garden; its choice sayings, truths, and promises are flowers; in thy Lord's strength work there, especially when the Sun shines upon thee: there, thou hast a right to gather, and there, if possible, be thou always gathering. And to all which I should say, study to obtain proficiency in

Greek and Hebrew, so as to be able to read the Old and New Testament in the languages in which they were written; by this means you obtain knowledge at the "fountain head." But when you are before the people, be careful to use nothing but great plainness of speech. As regards myself, perhaps it was better for me, in some respects, that I had no resource but the Bible, such a necessity tends to keep a man closer and sounder; it binds him to his own things: "Let them be only thine own, and not strangers with thee." Prov. v. 17. I leave others to admire the sight of a set of ministers following (like so many horses in a team) some great man as their leader. We have examples in the Bible, without requiring other guides.

A few days after my arrival at Market Drayton, a letter arrived from my wife, with the welcome news of her sight having been restored. She had been bled in the arm, and the relief thus afforded was almost immediate; and she was very soon as well as ever. It is well to be compelled to trust in the Lord, for his mercies are infinite.

The result of my first Sabbath at Drayton was satisfactory; though unacquainted with the congregation personally, yet in my feelings I had been at home among them, and in the pulpit I had certainly found the Lord's presence. I could say of it, Jehovah Shammi. The chapel was much to my taste, and upon the whole I felt that if the people should give me a call, I should find it difficult to refuse. They, on their parts, were friendly and cordial, and at the end of five or six Sabbaths they summoned a meeting of the church, at which all the members but one elected me their pastor. I accepted the pastoral office. They offered me fifty-two guineas per annum, with a good house and garden, rent free. As this sum seemed to me large for so small a congregation, and I thought I

could manage with less, I proposed a slight reduction of this salary, which was acceded to. A friend then remembered that my family had to be conveyed from Manchester; and one after another freely subscribed for the purpose. I accepted six pounds, and declined further contributions: wrote at once to my wife, who was now quite restored, to wind up at Manchester, and to meet me with our children at Newcastle-under-Lyne; thence they came in a gig, and I accompanied them on horseback, our friends the Rileys having supplied those means of conveyance. We reached Oakley Mills in April, 1822, stayed a few days there with our kind and hospitable friends, afterwards went to Mr. Sambrook's, and thence to our destined habitation.

The house which was appropriated to our use, was neat and comfortable, with a good garden, and at the end of it a pleasant meadow, in which I had free permission to walk. Our kind friends had laid in for us stores of all manner of provisions for some days. In so ample a way did the Lord provide for us, that I can only regret, in looking back upon his benefits, that I was so little thankful: and in this I am constrained to plead guilty before God; and yet I may be allowed to hope, that I was not without some desire to live before him in thankfulness and obedience.

CHAPTER XII.

MARKET DRAYTON.—[1822—25.]

FAVOUR'D IN THE PULPIT—THE CROSS SENT—FIRST MINISTERIAL TRIAL—OPPOSITION REMOVED—DEATH OF CHILD—LETTERS—GOES TO SUPPLY AT DEVIZES.

DURING the first Sabbaths of my residence at Market Drayton, the Lord favoured me in the pulpit with much of his presence, and great power, and enlargement of soul; but after my hands were fairly put to the plough, He sent the cross. I had now to pass through my first great ministerial trial as a pastor.

Among the members of the church were two leading men, brothers, one of whom, after my first sermon, had been the foremost in urging the congregation to engage me permanently; but in a few weeks had changed his note, and was then the only member who opposed the church in their choice. These, considering themselves to be learned men, thought it their wisdom to despise my preaching; and as I was unlearned, they expected or hoped to succeed in putting me to silence, even in the midst of my sermon. For this purpose they used to take up a position opposite the pulpit, laugh and sneer, and with pencil and paper in hand, write down what they called my unlearned blunders. They also attempted to prejudice the people by giving out that I preached experience, and not the gospel, and in this they succeeded with some of the outside hearers, and they gained a few followers. To render the cross still more painful, darkness

began to envelop my mind, so that, like Samson, I had to grind in the prison-house; but I was encouraged to arise and thresh energetically by the frequent coming of these words: "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." Jer. xxiii. 28. And the Lord was very kind in supporting me under this my first severe ministerial trial, by sending me this comforting passage: "The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning."

It happened one evening that I had entered the pulpit without a text; the little congregation was all assembled, and the second hymn was nearly finished, and there sat my opponents in front, expecting my halting! Not a passage presented itself, and I could only come to the conclusion that my mouth was to be stopped, and that the adversaries at last were to have their triumph. Satan suggested that I had better escape at once through the vestry; and I was meditating my escape accordingly, while the last lines of the hymn were being sung. At this crisis, these words came powerfully to my mind: "Son of man, thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them." Ezek. ii. and Jer. i. 17. Freed from the fear of man, I immediately rose and opened upon the forty-second Psalm. And such a measure of extraordinary liberty and power was bestowed upon me, that even my two opponents were compelled to acknowledge it in part. I now found that there was a necessity for me to continue to thresh, and I did so; and was often reminded of Samson, when he took hold of the two main pillars of the house, and bowed with all his might.

Meantime, some of God's children fed high under the word, and showed me no little sympathy, whilst the two critics kept up their opposition, and their efforts to draw away more of my hearers. Failing in

this, they shortly left me with their followers, and having procured a new pulpit, they carried it past my house in procession, the chief men heading it. They threatened that they would soon have me out of the place, and truly I had my own fears on the matter. But the trial drove me to the right quarter, and I was not long in finding deliverance. One of these leaders commenced preaching; he set out with very high doctrines, then rapidly sunk as low: this produced dissensions amongst them, and in about four months they broke up.

Painful as are such trials, I believe them to be appointed of God, and that they are at times overruled for good: "For the wrath of man shall praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He will restrain." "Offences must needs come, but woe unto the man by whom the offence cometh." Eventually the two leading men were removed, by the hand of God, out of the country, and we were strongly upheld, and became more united and peaceable than before.

But I was soon initiated into a new kind of pastoral trial,—irregularities among the flock. The church at Market Drayton had, previous to my arrival, been the seat of much disorder, and there was still enough of it left to cause me great uneasiness.

Besides this trouble, I suffered also in reproving disorders, from the danger of falling into an angry and scolding spirit. One Sabbath morning, after I had, as I imagined, disburdened my conscience, I entered the vestry vastly pleased that I had been so honest and faithful. It was then my practice to retire directly after service, to pray for a blessing on my labours. I went to my room for this purpose, and on kneeling down the Lord sent me a sharp word of reproof and correction: "The servant of the Lord *must not strive*; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose

themselves ; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth ; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." 2 Tim. ii. 24—26. This powerful instruction was afterwards of great use to me ; it was the beginning of some lessons that were needful to teach me how to behave myself in his work : " For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

I am convinced that it is most difficult rightly to discharge the duties of the ministry : to be faithful to the souls of men, and yet loving ; to be wise as a serpent, yet innocent and free from guile ; bold as a lion, yet harmless as a dove : to be valiant for the truth, yet no brawler ; honest among men, and not covetous ; to be suspected, withstood, despised, abhorred, and yet to be found faithful unto death. Who is sufficient for these things ?

In addition to my labours at Market Drayton, I went once a fortnight to Nantwich, in Cheshire, (where I had a little knot of good friends, who showed me much kindness,) and preached in a farm-house. I also preached at Hook Gate, and at one or two other places, and occasionally at Birmingham, among some of my old friends : by this time there had been another division there. During this period I had many mercies, spiritual and temporal. It had been my practice for several years to wander into the fields and retired spots, that I might pour out my soul before God, unrestrained by the presence of man. I found the country around Market Drayton delightful, and in my daily walks, where I could serve God without interruption, many a sweet and pleasant hour have I spent in this way : they were truly golden hours to my soul.

In temporal things we had always a sufficiency, but no surplus. My salary was small, yet the gracious Lord never suffered us to want. I named that place

Goshen ! for I never was more amply provided for. God's hand-basket was often seen at our door, plentifully laden with good things. I do not think that the portion which Caleb gave to his daughter was equal to it ! We were often brought within a few pence, but the Lord never failed us. He gave that people a most liberal heart, and they were as kind to my wife and children, as they were to me, and such things should not be passed over in silence. Two families in particular were singularly kind to us. When I used to remonstrate with my friends the Riley's, on their generosity, they usually answered me by saying, "That the more they gave, the more they had." My friend Mr. Sambrook's regular annual public contribution was eighteen pounds, but that never satisfied his liberal heart ; I have known him contribute thirty-five pounds in one year to our support. On one occasion he gave me, what I supposed was a one-pound note, but on reaching home I was greatly surprised to find it was five pounds. As I was in no kind of want then, I felt much scruple in receiving it, but a severe domestic affliction, which happened almost immediately afterwards, made the present very serviceable. During our residence in Manchester, two of our infant children had died, and here we lost another. My eldest child Maria, was suddenly attacked with hooping-cough, and carried off in a few days. She was a great favourite, her little prattle rendered her most engaging, and her illness caused us the greatest anxiety. The child seemed instinctively to feel our sorrow, for being present one evening while her infant sister was being dressed, she looked first at her mother, and then at me, and pointing to the baby, said, in a very emphatic manner, far beyond her years, "There's a pretty little urchin for you." She evidently intended us to understand, that henceforth we must console ourselves in the little one. The child's

words cut me to the heart, for they carried the conviction that she was about to be taken from us.

Great soul-travail was brought upon me, and I was made to be instant in prayer for our dear child's salvation. I had many special feelings about her, and I believe she was one of Christ's fold.

The illness of my child prevented me from preaching at Mr. G——y's chapel in Manchester, where I was engaged to preach on the occasion of its re-opening. The words "Stand still," were upon my mind, and I purposed to preach at Drayton from them; but I had misunderstood their meaning. It was *not I*, who was to preach on that day, but the *Lord*, who was to preach *to me!* When the friends called on the Sabbath morning, the child was evidently dying, and they agreed to have prayer-meetings. She expired in my arms at about two o'clock in the afternoon; and on my spirit there was a most *solemn grandeur* attending her soul's departure. I most firmly believed that she went to glory. This event was acutely felt by my dear wife and me, but was greatly blessed to us both. Here, again, (as I have just stated,) the Lord was very kind, and put it in the hearts of our friends to be very generous to us, so that I was constantly led to recall those touching words, "When I sent you out without scrip or money, lacked ye any thing? and they said, Nothing, Lord!" When He first sent me out to preach, I had neither purse, scrip, nor money; and though I have often been in straits, and am to this day, yet I have hitherto lacked nothing. Let Him have all the praise, O my soul! In many things I was well off at Drayton, if I had had wisdom to know it.

But the *lax* spirit which I have mentioned before, still continued among some of the people, and I found that it had taken deep root before I saw them. To overcome this serious evil, by God's grace I applied myself earnestly and anxiously; but what were my

feelings at seeing several of the church members resort to a place of sinful amusement. They passed my door two days consecutively, on the way to the race-course. On the following Sabbath I reproved them very seriously from the pulpit, and they bore the reproof. But this circumstance, together with others, had so distressed my mind, that I felt it impossible to remain with them: "What fellowship hath Christ with Belial?"

I stated my feelings and intentions to some of my principal friends, and wrote to Mr. G——y, of Manchester, (my former pastor,) informing him that I could not succeed in establishing Christian discipline on a proper footing, and that I must leave Drayton. Through his recommendation I was invited to supply the church at Devizes, Wilts. I obtained leave of my people to do so, and I set off on my journey of 135 miles.

At Birmingham, I met for the first time Mr. J. W——, of T——, and heard him preach twice, and travelled with him and his wife, as far as Bath; at his request, I related the dealings of God with me, and also my call to the ministry. He appeared satisfied with my account, united, and friendly; gave me an invitation to visit him, and some good advice, which I certainly received as from a father in Christ, having heard him spoken of as such by the brethren at Manchester.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his Father.*

Market Drayton, 1822.

I HAD told you that there had been a separation of a few individuals from our church and congregation; I had not informed you particularly of the reason they had to leave;

so far as I am acquainted with what is right they had no offence from me, but the offence of the Cross—the Cross which is a stumbling-block to the Jew, and an offence, as well as foolishness, to the Gentile. If I have been taught of God at all, I have been taught to set forth a little of vital Godliness, heart-work—an experience of, and personal acquaintance with the Lord. “Know ye not that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.” There is an humble and earnest contending for the faith once delivered to the saints. The ministry of Christ is a warfare, and every real servant is a soldier ; he is to fight the good fight of faith, to war a good warfare—God is his armour, Christ is his Captain, strength, and shield ; the word is his sword, his girdle, his truth ; his enemies are Antichrist, error, the world, flesh, and the devil. Christ is his wisdom, righteousness, holiness, redemption, light, life, grace, strength—his all : he must press forward, endure hardness, eye his Captain, stand, advance, and move at the word ; his danger is trusting to self, or any kind of carnal reasonings. The foe is powerful, but let the soldier look upon his sword, and rejoice that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds,—casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God ; and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. He is to preach the truth, (so far as he has been made acquainted with it,) and nothing but the truth, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. He is not to try to please men ; for he who seeketh to please men is the servant of men, and not the servant of Christ. The servant of Christ is taught to eye his Master, to receive his orders, to run his errands, and to deliver his messages. He has to serve the Lord in divers characters ; sometimes he is turned into a threshing machine, and made instrumentally to purge the Lord’s floor. The children of God will remain, but dry hypocritical professors are offended ; they fly like chaff before the driving wind, and the Lord saith, “What is the chaff to the wheat ?” In my judgment, the church here was com-

chiefly of dead professors. By-the-bye, this practice of keeping churches of such like characters, is, in my opinion, one of the great evils which abound in our day—it yields no real benefit to any man, but does much injury, is replete with nothing but mischief. The sermon which these persons laid against me, was preaching experimentally. I believe they were upon the *surface* of religion,—professed a head knowledge of the truth, were total strangers to *heart-work*. Their faith stood in the wisdom of men, not in “the power of God.” They had the *form* of godliness, but cried out against the *power*. The apostle says: “Having the form of godliness but denying the power thereof, from such men turn thou away.” The great question is, what manner of persons are they who have flown from under my ministry? had they been children, it would have been a sad evidence against it; if it be otherwise, the matter lieth not at my door. To bring about a reconciliation would be, I think, a vain attempt. “What concord hath light with darkness? fellowship hath Christ with Belial?” Purity in a church is prosperity. Wherever there are a few of the children united together in the faith, fear, love, ordinances, and truth of the Gospel of Christ, there, in my opinion, true prosperity. To attain this, is a matter of rejoicing. May it be my constant, steady aim, O Lord. I thought it would be well to state things to you, that you might examine the matter by the tone of the word, and condemn or justify my progress, according to the oracles of God. It is my desire that I might be favoured to have my mind ever open to correction, and be guided by the unerring spirit of truth.

. ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, to her *Husband*.

Drayton, 1823.

MY DEAR EDWARD,

ALL be rejoiced to see you home again; you will give me credit when I assure you that there is no tem-

poral blessing which can so animate my spirit as to know that your affection is still as warm towards me, as mine must ever be towards you. I can truly say, you are the dearest part of myself; I participate in all the troubles and difficulties which I know you have to encounter, and which we must both admit to be neither few nor small; nevertheless, hitherto the Lord hath helped you, and I trust that he will continue to do so, for we know by happy experience, that He is a God of unchanging love, and that blessed are they who have been brought to put their trust in him. . . . Farewell, my dear Edward; believe me,

Your affectionate wife,

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend.*

Drayton, 1824.

WE have had a sore struggle in the church; something like your late struggle—as much so as little events can be like great ones. We expect to lose some five or six; but as I have all along been convinced our Church wanted purging, I am at this moment well satisfied, although the business has been one of deep distress to me. . . I believe I have been made and kept faithful. My plainness has not procured for me much of this world's esteem, either with professors or profane. The testimony of a good conscience is the best thing I have to boast of in this world. It is my desire to be made and kept honest; and we may fairly glory if we are counted worthy to suffer shame for His name's sake.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend.*

Market Drayton, April, 1824.

ACCORDING to my promise I sit down to acquaint you with our present situation and trials. It is a painful task, and I hardly know where to begin, although I would fain

endure hardness as a good soldier, knowing it to be their inevitable lot.

On the afternoon of the 28th March I lost my dear little Maria. She suffered intensely during the whole of the morning ; I took her on my lap, and witnessed with much mental distress her bodily agonies. Many petitions, sighs, and groans went up to the God of Israel on her behalf. At the death of my first child, I was favoured with a powerful and satisfactory manifestation of its interest—but not so, in the second—not so with this. Yet I may state that even in the sorrows, the agonies of death, in this instance, an unspeakable grandeur appeared. I thought it was much like the death-bed of an expiring saint ! It was a powerful sermon to me, and taught the infinite importance of eternal things, the vanity of terrestrial objects. Oh, how pitiful, how paltry did the vain show of this life then appear ! My language was, “Let me die the death of the righteous !” Jonah lost his gourd—a gourd of which he had been exceeding glad, a gourd with whose fond endearments he had beguiled many a lonesome hour. It came up in a night—it went down in a night.

My child’s mortal remains lie in the burial-ground near my garden hedge, mingled with the clods of the valley. I feel all the father within me ; but I desire to be still, and bow before Him who has a right to do what he will with his own. Oh, that the Lord might powerfully, perpetually, and permanently sanctify the stroke to a poor unthinking mortal—one most easily intoxicated either with the maddening cares, or the deceitful blandishments of life ! * * *

Respecting the state of the church, &c., here, I should begin by saying, that it is my constant practice in my work to attempt, instrumentally, to bring the tribes to Rest, and to set forth the nature of glorious Liberty. . . . I have been reproved for presumption in calling God “My Father ;” and the language of appropriation is but little understood here among many. In fine, the interest appears to me to be a fleshly establishment, and I feel that the whole body droops and languishes. I believe I have truly sought their best interests—but I do not please, and

I am tired of this kind of religion, and long to leave it to some of the *polished sons of Ebenezer*. That the Lord will open some other door, or way, will be my prayer.

Your very affectionate brother,

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Deacon of the Baptist Church in Devizes.*

Market Drayton, Oct. 1st, 1824.

I RECEIVED yours of the 28th ult., and according to your request, sit down to give an early answer.

Being quite willing to serve you for the time specified, I have only to say that, if the Lord will, I expect to be with you on the 24th October. It is my earnest wish that the brethren of Devizes will not be induced to look for great things. My common aim is to deliver a plain, simple, open, honest testimony; this is required; more, as it appears to me, is superfluous and unnecessary. Indeed I am a plain man, sick of the disgusting affectation of the times, and but ill-qualified by nature and art for the practice. Splendid natural talents, with all the unceasing varieties which art possesses, may tickle the ears and even bewitch the soul, but these will never truly enlighten the understanding, settle the judgment, or benefit the real lovers of God's consistent truth. Sweeping gifts are to be observed with caution. If they are given to a bad man he may make a very bad use of them; if to a good man, it will take great grace—aye, and great trials too, to keep him humble under them. According to my own hearing, the simplest testimony is satisfactory when the power proceeds, and the unction flows with the word; and the most striking testimony is useless without these. I delight to hear a father, but I know that he was not always a father—Rome was not built in a day; and it is because he has become a man that he has put away childish things. I do not envy the regard which is usually paid to seniors in the ministry; yet I have seen that such are eagerly
almost torn asunder, between rival interests,

whilst the younger parts of the ministry are discarded and sent to Jericho, until their beards be grown, and until themselves are become invalided. They, in their turn, become popular ; but it is when nature is about to fail. There is little else than kicks and cuffs in the nursery, therefore Paul tells his son in the faith to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. But perhaps in the substance of these remarks some of my brethren have long been beforehand with me—if they know these things my remarks appear to be fruitless ; if not, they are not likely to be tutored by me. There are three things which it becometh me to keep in mind—viz. God, his glory, and his church's benefit. In the ministry, I cannot act at all with any degree of propriety save when these are my ends ; I am made to look to Him from whom I received my commission, for manner and matter, and temporal and spiritual support ; to love Zion and to love the service ; to learn to endure afflictions (being reared in the school of adversity) ; to meet difficulties and face dangers ; to turn the word out as it comes, without mincing or temporizing ; to hate all error, and the amalgamating system ; and whilst, on the one hand, I am not to seek to mingle false fire with the word, yet to be emulous to deliver it in all its own offence, and above all to water the word with my prayers and tears, that God may water it with the dews of Heaven. Sometimes it is to my comfort to know that all my movements are regulated or overruled by the great Head of the church. Expecting to see you at the time appointed, and wishing you as a church, grace, mercy, and peace, after earnestly begging an interest in your prayers, I remain, with the sincerest affection,

Yours to serve,
E. BLACKSTOCK.

“ This letter disgusted several of the members, so that they would fain have given me word to tarry where I was—namely, at Drayton ! ”

CHAPTER XIII.

DEVIZES.—[1825-6.]

JOURNEY—HOLY ANOINTING—BLESSING ON LABOURS—TWO DREAMS—
IS INVITED FOR TWELVE MONTHS BY THE CHURCH—RETURNS TO
DRAYTON FOR FAMILY—OPPOSITION.

IT pleased God to visit me on my journey into Devizes with a remarkable anointing, which showed me that, whatever might be the issue of my visit, my steps were clearly directed of God to that place.

I had quitted Drayton in a very dark state, and continued so, until my arrival at Bath, where I parted with Mr. and Mrs. W——, my travelling companions. The society into which I was thrown at Bath did not mend my condition. The inn was full of guests, and very noisy. I retired early from the scene of riot in the public room, to escape to my own chamber, but the noise pursued me thither. I was unable to close my eyes, and at two in the morning I was surprised by the intrusion of a person in a state of intoxication, who for lack of other accommodation was to share my apartment. At the sight of this apparition I hastily dressed and went down stairs, where I remained until the Devizes coach drew up, and I took my departure, dark and dead in spirit.

Now God and conscience took me to task for my carnality, earthliness, and death. How wholly unfit did I appear for a preacher of the gospel! Perhaps I never had a more awful insight into my own heart and ways. My eyes were opened to see many of my

faults, and they appeared overwhelming. I seemed a monster of heart-sins against a kind and gracious God and Father. This was the moment at which it pleased God to effect for me a great and striking deliverance. The Divine Spirit poured into my soul a powerful and deep spirit of repentance, which brought me to great self-humiliation. With Job, I was made to say, "Behold, I am vile! I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Tears of contrition fell from my eyes, and my heart was broken. Then came the good Physician, pouring in his oil and wine. The sovereign mercy of God suddenly flowed into my soul like a flood, sweeping away all my guilt and all my deserved condemnation: it made me to feel one with Christ for ever—in *Him* all fair, and without a spot! The Sun of righteousness broke out and shone resplendently upon my soul. I was in perfect peace, and my heart was filled with love and gratitude; all fears and all disquietudes had vanished, and I sat there, (behind the coach,) praising and blessing God with solemn rejoicing.

This anointing remained upon me for the space of six months, with little intermission; and I was led in a very striking manner into the meaning of those words, "Great peace have all they that love the Lord, and nothing shall offend them" (or be a stumbling-block to them), Ps. cxix. In the spirit of those words I entered Devizes, and as happy as I could desire to be in this world: never had I reached any place in a more peaceful, loving frame of spirit. The Lord seemed to guide me into Devizes, and to make me prepared to meet every event that might befall me there.

At the first house I entered I met with a disagreeable encounter, to which I shall have occasion hereafter to allude. Unhappily for me, my acquaintance with the mistress of the house did not end where it began. The master also looked moody, and I did not find it a

small relief to be informed that lodgings were provided for me elsewhere. The family with whom I was to be boarded, received me with true Christian cordiality, and I passed six weeks in their peaceful dwelling, being much at home and most kindly treated.

The chapel at Devizes was a beautiful one, and contained a regular steady congregation, comprising a body of about sixty members in church fellowship, among whom I noticed many aged and venerable persons. To the people generally I felt regard and union. In the pulpit I found liberty; and with many of the friends I had sweet converse in private, and the souls of several did, from the first, cleave to mine. Moreover, the Lord was here, blessedly; present with me in secret. I walked much in the fields, and had, in those rambles, some of the most delightful seasons I ever experienced. My soul drew near the Lord in prayer, and so sweetly did his glories shine upon me, that I could commit all my affairs into his hands, saying—"It is peace! All is well between God and my soul!"

The blessed Spirit favoured me with holy and delightful meditations upon the word of God, and upon His work as wrought upon my soul; so that I can truly say, my employment then was prayer, contemplation, and praise.

There appeared to be a blessing also on my labours, for my hearers would often stop me on the road to tell me of blessings received from my ministry; and to express an earnest desire that I might be settled among them. My usual reply was, that Christ was my Lord and master, and that they must appeal to Him, for I was at his entire disposal.

I often now recall those happy rambles, where my God and I did, in very truth, walk and talk together. Those were glorious days, golden opportunities, for which my gratitude should ever flow.

Two dreams in quick succession came in the midst of all this joy and peace, to trouble my repose, and to indicate approaching trials.

I was in a dark and dismal cell, and quite alone: suddenly a large serpent appeared before me; its body, which was spotted, was of the thickness of a man's thigh, and several yards in length; it had the head of a calf, and a forked tongue darted from its mouth. In an instant the monster flew at me, twisted itself partly round my neck, and then gradually coiled round my body down to my feet, when it darted its fang with all its might at my left foot; but I discovered that I had so strong a pair of shoes on, that it could not penetrate them. Greatly terrified, I struggled violently, and at last succeeded in throwing off the reptile, which then left me and retreated. Upon this I awoke. As I lay musing upon this vision I fell asleep, and dreamed a second time.

Again I was alone in a dark prison; at the further end I thought I perceived the mouth of a den. While my eyes were intently fixed upon the spot in terror and foreboding, I saw emerge from the den a huge and ferocious lion; its eyes were enormous, and glaring with rage and fury; every instant I expected its attack, and remained crouching against the wall to receive it. The beast stalked about, gave a tremendous roar, and then, as though restrained by some invisible power, it slowly retreated into its dungeon without doing me any hurt.

It struck me that I had at some time or other seen in Devizes the person whom the serpent represented. I have already alluded to a disagreeable incident on the very first day of my arrival; it took place at the house of a leading person in the church, whose wife exercised considerable interference with the church affairs. This person considered herself a Deborah. Though she often told me in plain terms that she was

of a very meek spirit; yet for my own part I always found her in a very pharisaical one, full of self-sufficiency, and as legal as a Galatian. She had chosen to believe that unworthy motives had brought me to Devizes, and with great harshness, and in a manner altogether unbecoming either a woman, or a person professing religion, continued to sift me during the afternoon of my arrival, making her own remarks very freely. For several hours I bore patiently her cross-examinations and reflections, and at parting told her plainly, "That she had been hunting for a fox all the afternoon, but it was to no purpose, for there was no fox at all in the case."

To return to my dreams. Upon awaking a second time, and reflecting upon them, both so unlike anything I had ever seen, yet pointing to one interpretation, and occurring both together, I came to the conclusion that the second beast signified the devil, and that sharp trial, or temptation, in some form or other, awaited me; but finding that I had been saved both from the fangs of the reptile and the jaws of the lion, I committed myself in prayer unto a covenant God, trusting that he would deliver me from every evil work; and feeling safe in his care I fell asleep, until my usual hour of rising. My dream did not disturb my peace the following day; the Lord was with me, and I feared neither lion nor serpent.

Before the period of my six weeks' invitation to Devizes had expired, the church there met together, and agreed to extend their invitation to twelve months. The individual before mentioned, being of a different opinion from the rest, had purposely absented herself from this meeting. One of the deacons brought me the information of my having been chosen, and stated that he had never seen the people so united, loving, and peaceable, and he added what was still more acceptable: "They do not exalt the man, but

the grace of God in the man." A sounder testimony I could not desire, nor a more cordial invitation, and I at once accepted it, and set off for Drayton, promising to return to them so soon as my arrangements for leaving that place should have been concluded.

My friends at Drayton, on being informed of this new engagement, were pained and wounded; and were even reluctant to acquiesce in it, but after some difficulty, it was arranged that I should quit them in four weeks. At the end of that time we parted very amicably, and many of the friends collected in the street to bid us farewell. I had then been about three years among them, had received great kindness, which I hope never to forget, and the pleasant spots in the neighbourhood were endeared to me by many sacred associations.

We bade farewell to all around the Wrekin, and started for Birmingham, where we received many attentions; and at Bath were met by friends who had come over a distance of nineteen miles from Devizes, to escort us thither. We arrived on the 7th January, 1825. I was again warmly received by my former host and hostess for a few days, when we removed to our new dwelling.

At the end of the first six months of my residence at Devizes, the sweet and sacred anointing before related had subsided; yet the Lord made me, and continued to keep me, during my stay there, diligent and fervent in the use of Scriptural means, namely prayer, meditation, and study of the Word.

Though I had to pass through many changes, yet in my soul's feelings I was often highly favoured in the pulpit; and I may with a good conscience say, that by the grace of God I spent myself to the uttermost in His service, and that it was my constant desire and prayer to be profitable to all the people of God in that place, of whom I believe there was a

goodly number. I was made conscious that I both knew and loved Christ, my Master, and that I loved his work, and the people generally: I desired no better position. And from having been privileged with the Lord's presence in an extraordinary manner, on my first coming among them, I entertained no doubt that I was in the very place where God had for the time been pleased to place me; I think that I could have even laid down my life for the good of the people.

According to the best of my judgment, the Lord was evidently and eminently with me; I often sensibly experienced his presence and his power. Others appeared conscious of this, and bore their testimony to my labours, (a testimony which was never sought for, but was often given unasked,) and it pleased God to give me some choice friends among them. At my first arrival, a person sent me a pressing invitation,—he was confined to his room by a sprained ankle; his soul did cleave to me in a special manner from the first. He received me with the cordiality of an old acquaintance, and became to me a friend, and a brother: he and I ran well together, and my soul was knit to his. This was Mr. Stephen Dark, one of the best, truest, and dearest friends I ever had,—he was to me a Jonathan! He is now in the ministry; may the Lord be with him, and make him a blessing, and prosper all such men, wherever they may be! I wish there were more thickly sown.* Nor was this the only faithful friend that my gracious God raised up for me: Mr. James Dalman, a simple-hearted and venerable man of God, would often meet me in the vestry after service, and taking my hand, say, with an expression of the fullest sympathy, that he saw with me **eye to eye.**" I might also enumerate Mr. John

* Dark now preaches at Salem Chapel to the little flock of 12. Hitherto.

Gibbs, deacon, George Slade, and many others, who were true to me as the sun to its rising. Let their names and their memories be ever dear. My friend and brother Dark, strengthened and upheld my hands in prayer; he carried my labours constantly to a throne of grace, and as I have said, walked side by side with me, as a brother beloved. Through the kindness of this dear friend, we were brought through many difficulties; when I was at Devizes, my family was on the increase, provisions were high, and I had to purchase household furniture. As my salary was one hundred pounds a-year, the hand-basket disappeared; yet though we were often brought low, my brother Dark took care that we did not want. My brethren, it is a kind Lord that makes kind friends!

But prosperity was never unmixed: sufficient ballast was allotted me to prevent my spirit becoming elated; a thorn was never to be wanting in my nest.

The impression of my unfavourable reception at one house in the place, and the behaviour of the mistress when I first arrived there, quite a stranger, had not been lost upon me; and gradually I was sensible of the working of her influence in instilling a prejudice into some of the hearers against the ministry; and at length I observed even active measures being taken to create a *faction* in our church. She had purposely absented herself from the meeting when I was chosen, and soon afterwards her house became a house of call for the discontented spirits, where deliberations were held, and a party organized in the church against me. This party, it is true, numbered at first but four or five members in a church consisting of between fifty and sixty; but even this minority of active and able partisans, was enough to cause serious uneasiness to the whole body. I foresaw that this leaven might work among them. "Behold," says

the apostle, "how great a matter a little (unholy) fire kindleth!" The former of my two dreams was also brought back to my recollection, and kept my eye steadily fixed upon the growing evil: it was a weight which lay like lead upon my heart. I tried to make some impression upon the mistress of the party, as to her religious state, but to no purpose; she was perfectly self-satisfied. "There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up." Prox. xxx. 13.

In this trying position I felt no security, but as the Lord enabled me to lay it before him, and cast it upon his care, this my dear wife and I were often favoured to do: the trial was thus the means in the Lord's hand of setting me, and keeping me on my watch-tower.

I had abundance of work, for I preached three times on the Sabbath, and in my turn with the deacons spoke at the prayer-meeting on a week night. I also preached at Pottern, Roude, Studly, Calne, Melksham, Bath, and Allington; a few times at Trowbridge, once at Bradford, and at several other places.

My garden, which I cultivated myself, was of considerable size, and afforded me exercise. It produced, through God's blessing, abundance of vegetables. Behind it rose Roundway-hill, where Cromwell once planted his artillery.

I was not without domestic anxieties. The summer of my first year at Devizes was very sultry, and my eldest daughter during the hot days had frequent bleedings of the nose, which greatly weakened and undermined her constitution. This was a great trial, and source of anxiety both to her mother and me.

CHAPTER XIV.

[1826.]

**TWELVE MONTHS EXPIRE—RENEWED FOR SIX MONTHS — OPPONENTS,
(A SMALL BUT ACTIVE MINORITY,) CAUSE DISQUIET — PROMISES
APPLIED—STRIKING DREAM—IMPRESSION WHILE PREACHING OF
FINAL SERMON—WARNED IN GARDEN—STRATAGEM OF OPPONENTS
SUCCESSFUL—QUITS DEVIZES—INVITED TO POTTON FOR FOUR WEEKS
—LETTERS.**

IN this way my first year at Devizes rolled on and expired. A meeting of the church was held, and my engagement was renewed for six months, on the usual show of hands being taken, five only having been raised against the proposal, as I was informed by one of the deacons. In token of their satisfaction, the members also presented me, out of their endowed funds, with a handsomely bound copy of Cruden's Concordance. In this friendly feeling, almost all the hearers seemed to participate. The smallness of the dissentient minority might therefore, under ordinary circumstances, have rendered their opposition of little or no account; but the warnings I had received made me look upon it very differently. Besides, some new cause of 'disquiet was occurring every three or four days, and the cutting ill treatment I received from one particular quarter, began to excite in me a vexed and fretful spirit. My opponents were watching for my tripping; my dear wife and I, therefore, betook ourselves to the reading of the Scriptures and prayer with redoubled earnestness. In much trouble one afternoon, I was led to read the fifth chapter of Job,

and the Spirit of God with new living power and consolation applied every word of that chapter to the soul of a man that we could never forget the blessing of that season. Our souls were in great sorrow, rejoiced in the consolations of God. On another occasion, when I had passed a sleepless night, owing to fresh wounds received, and like poor David, was watching my soul with my tears, these words came over my mind: "Thus saith the Lord, Retain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord: and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border." Jer. xxxi. 16, 17. I instantly received comfort, my tears flowed no longer. The manifestation of the full meaning of those words, as well as the complete fulfilment of that promise, I must leave in the hands of a faithful God.

But we had new warnings. Early one morning my wife awoke in a state of great agitation: she sat up in bed wringing her hands, and trembling in every limb. It was some time before her mind was sufficiently calmed and collected to speak: at length in a very solemn manner, and with an energy never to be forgotten, she exclaimed, "Oh, Edward! I have had such a dream as I never had in my life before: I dreamed that you and I were in the house in which we now live, and that being alarmed by a noise in the road, we both ran to the garden gate, and saw a vast concourse of people filling the road and the fields, which are in front of the house. We called to the people to know what was happening, and they answered, 'Don't you see that large dark spot in the sun?' We said, 'No.' They told us to look again: when we looked the second time, the dark spot was visible. We kept our eyes steadily upon it,

and found it rapidly increase until it assumed the appearance of a human figure, standing upright in the sun. The feet reached the lower, the head the upper part of the orb. The multitude continued every moment fast increasing until it was like an assembled world : by this time you and I had joined them. All were in a state of dreadful alarm and apprehension. Gradually, and in the most majestic manner, the personage to whom all eyes were attracted, descended in a direct line lower than the sun, towards us, and in an instant we recognised the Lord Jesus Christ ! He stood in the air, high above the infinite multitude, and directly over them : in his right hand he held a pair of balances, and commenced weighing masses of the people, and after having done so, he parted the crowd, spreading out his arms as a swimmer does to swim, removing large numbers to his left hand at each motion of his arm.

“ With awful majesty he descended lower and lower, coming nearer and nearer to judgment. At this moment I took hold of your hand, and we both fell prostrate ; and in the awful apprehension of being removed to his left hand, we raised our imploring look towards him. Again he weighed fresh masses : spread his arms again, and separated immense numbers who were hurried off to the left, and descending lower, he repeated this weighing separation, coming lower and nearer each time, until we feared that scarcely any would remain. He was now approaching so near that we distinctly saw his face, and while we were awaiting another movement of separation with breathless anxiety and terror, he stayed his hands.

“ With surprise and gladness we rose from the ground, —those who remained being with us,—and we were rejoiced to see that there was still a goodly company. We were in a beautiful field, triangular in form. The Saviour came and stood over the ground on which we

were assembled. Every eye was fixed upon him ; he smiled upon us, a smile that filled all hearts with rejoicing ; then stretching out his right hand over us, he said : ' These are they whom I count worthy to suffer *persecution* for my name's sake.' With this I awoke."

The circumstance under which this dream came, and the nature of it, rendered it to me a very solemn event. I had previously been passing through the experience of those words : " For unto you is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but to suffer for his sake." Phil. i. 29. These words were also often both on my mind, and that of my wife : " If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." 2 Tim. ii. 12.

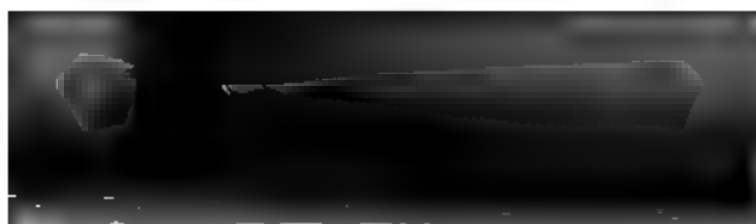
To suffer with Christ I know by experience to be a most severe, solemn, and holy baptism. The tenor of the dream therefore quite harmonized with my feelings and experience, and made me feel that it was intended as much for me, as for her. Thus the Lord was preparing our minds for what was coming. I could not help connecting it with those of the lion and the serpent, already mentioned. The dream I considered certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

At the end of eighteen months, namely, in June, 1826, the term of my renewed engagement at Devizes having expired, the church again held a meeting, and passed a resolution appointing me their pastor for a further period of twelve months. The hostile minority had by this time gained an accession of two or three names to their side, including one of the deacons, so that about six votes were given against this resolution ; but as the rest of the church was unanimous in its favour, my friends considered the business as now **finally settled**, and were greatly pleased : for my own **not** quite so satisfied.

used over ; it was Sabbath evening in
ion appeared to be lulled, and all was

calm and peaceful amongst us. As I went to chapel, I was in great perplexity for a subject for my evening sermon, the only text which presented itself contained the word "Finally," and to that word I had a great repugnance: but as I could get hold of no other, I was compelled to preach from this text: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Eph. vi. 10, 11. While preaching I was suddenly surprised by an impression falling on my spirit, that possibly I might be addressing the congregation for the last time; and so strong was the feeling, that the whole character of my discourse seemed as it were shaped as a farewell sermon. On my return home, I mentioned this to my dear wife, who had only been confined of her last child about ten days. She seemed to think that I was for once mistaken; said that I was apt to forbode the worst, and thought no more about it: but my impression was a right one.

The next morning, there being some gardening to be done, I set about my digging. While I was intent upon this occupation, suddenly these words came,—*"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."* Matt. xxvi. 41. I leant upon my spade and mused upon the passage, and then recommenced my work. A second time the words came. I stopped, again reflected awhile, and then resumed my digging. A third time, and like a thunder-clap came the words, "*Watch and pray*, that ye enter not into temptation." I threw down my spade, escaped to a retired part of the garden, and there began to call upon God. I was soon made aware of what was the matter. A dark cloud came over my mind, such as I had scarcely ever felt, accompanied by so heavy a weight of sorrow on my heart as human pen cannot describe.

[illegible]

of the church during the same period, were ever permitted to enter any of their church meetings.

The resolution having been passed, the members in general treated my appointment as finally settled; and seemed to consider, either that the ratification was unnecessary, or else that it would follow as a matter of course. No meeting was therefore appointed for the purpose. That the resolution of the large majority would ever be annulled by five or six dissentients, was what they never dreamed of. This false security proved fatal. No sooner was my appointment fixed, than *means were taken* to detach a few of the *poorer* church members who had voted with the majority in my favour; and to be brief, under the influence that was brought to bear upon them, six or seven of the poorer friends, who had for eighteen months invariably supported me, were induced in a few days to change sides, and to promise their votes to the opposition. All this was kept perfectly quiet. This point gained, and my friends being completely thrown off their guard, the next aim of our opponents was to choose a moment for a church meeting, when the attendance would be the thinnest. This was effected by a skilful manœuvre. The minority summoned a special church meeting, at a short notice, in the middle of hay-harvest: this meeting was to take place on Monday, in July 1826. It was in this state of things that I preached on the occasion, and under the impression already mentioned, from Ephes. vi. 10. This was the Sabbath preceding the meeting.

When I entered the pulpit that Sabbath evening, I had no more idea than a child, that I was then about to deliver my last discourse at Devizes; for though I had been told, by some of the oldest members, of certain surmisings of false dealing in the matter; yet it was not till afterwards that the real state of the case was fully disclosed.

The meeting took place: most of the members

who had formed the majority at the first meeting, considering the business of the second as unimportant, or as a matter of form only, and being engaged in securing their hay-crops, contented themselves with informing the rest the day before that their votes remained in my favour. The few who were at liberty attended, expecting to affirm the resolution of the former meeting, when to their surprise, indignation, and sorrow, they found themselves out-manceuvred, and, through the sudden desertion of seven of my supporters, outvoted by a majority of one: thirteen hands were held up in favour of my continuing, and fourteen against it,—the absentees not counting. And I was thus summarily dismissed from the office of pastor. Such was the message of the two deacons on the following morning.

They brought me two propositions, between which I had to choose: I was either to leave immediately, and receive thirty pounds, (by way of indemnity for certain necessary expenses, which I had incurred on my re-engagement, and which were to have been paid for by instalments,) or I was to remain for three months longer, and receive twenty-five pounds. I should state that the little church at Devizes has endowments, which bring in more than one hundred pounds a-year.

In delivering their message, the deacons showed me no little kindness and sympathy; one of them could not restrain his tears; and it was to their good offices, and my other friends, that I owed even these favourable conditions. I accepted the first of them, paid Mr. Pontin the bill of thirteen pounds, which I owed him for my furniture, cleared off my debt, and left the chapel.

A friend immediately came forward, and offered to take another chapel for me, and guarantee my salary for twelve months. To this proposal, I replied, that I must lay it before the Lord, and having done so, I

received this answer: "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." This was decisive, and I quitted Devizes.

The remembrance of these agonizing events excites even to this day painful emotions; they inflicted a wound upon my spirit, which was not quite healed for many a year, and never will be erased from my memory, for no man could ever have made me believe that such scenes were enacted in the Church of God, if I had not seen and felt them. Many of the friends came to condole with me; but this only added grief to my sorrow, for, like Job, I refused to be comforted. Here I bid these sorrowful recollections farewell, leaving the facts thus recapitulated to the verdict of every impartial Christian mind.

My opponents did not bring any charge against me, though challenged to do so: the reason was, that they could not. I had been made to go in and out before them in the fear of God; and when it is recollected that the Baptist Church consisted of about sixty members, all of whom were desirous of my continuing among them, (except the minority of fourteen;) that the second meeting, which reversed the decision of a large majority, was called in a hurried and unusual manner, and at a moment when it was known that more than one-half of my friends would inevitably be absent in the hay-fields; that the rescinding of their resolution took them entirely by surprise, while the minority mustered all their strength on the occasion; the candid reader will decide between myself and my opponents, whether or not their conduct was a course of systematic oppression. When their behaviour was placed before them in this light, they always repudiated such a charge: like the holy Inquisitors, who torture and mutilate and kill the people of God, "for the glory of God! and the good of the Church!" my oppressors denied that their

proceedings were persecution: and I have always found that when men shoot their arrows against a servant of Christ, nothing gives them such great offence as the imputation of persecution. But this I know, *God called it persecution*, by the Scriptures, which he applied with power to my soul. On one occasion, I had been much depressed by fresh wounds received on the Sabbath morning, and I was passing the house of some of my opponents on my way to the chapel for evening service, when the Lord mightily braced and comforted me by the application of these words: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and *persecute* you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." I well remember the spot, and never received these words with so much *power* as at that season, though they have often since been sent to my comfort. Moreover, I had lived to see the fulfilment of my two dreams, of the serpent and the lion; the Lord having thus prepared our minds for what was coming upon us. And, as I have said before, the last word I received at Devizes was,—“When they persecute you in this city, flee to another.” These facts convinced me that the treatment which I received at Devizes was, in the sight of God, *persecution*, and He will in his own time confirm his own word, to the confusion of those who have handed the bitter cup to his children. “He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given to us his Holy Spirit.” 1 Thess. iv. 8. It was a cup which I had tasted but little of before I came to Devizes: it was the appointment of Jehovah, that I should *then* and *thereafter* drink of it deeply.

Mr. Isaac Sloper, who then preached at Melksham, gave me
 ¹pit for the two first Sabbaths after

my ejection from Devizes, and behaved with the most kindness. Thence I was invited to Coventry, through the introduction of Mr. G——y, of Manchester, for the third week, and five following Sabbaths; and previous to the expiration of this engagement, I received an invitation,—through Mr. M——, of Godmanchester,—from Potton, Beds. for four weeks. Coventry is one of the darkest places for the real truth of God that I ever saw; but the friends there, although few in number, were extremely kind to me. Being invited by my early and kind friend, Mr. M——, to his house at Godmanchester, I spent a few days there, and then left with one of the deacons from Potton, who had kindly come over to escort me there.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his Father.*

Devizes, Jan. 1826.

VERY DEAR AND HONOURED FATHER,

I HAVE just received a letter from Mr. J——, giving an account of your present severe indisposition; and although it is what I have long foreboded, and what we might all expect from the common course of frail nature, yet it has been a shock both to Maria and myself, and I may add, we feel it keenly, and deeply sympathise with you in your woes. Trained in the school of adversity, we can feel for the distresses of him who is near and dear to us by sacred ties, and our fond imagination hovers over one, who has had in his cup of life much of the gall and wormwood, whilst it is our fervent desire and prayer, that sovereign mercy may mingle its thousand sacred sweets, and that the love of God may be poured in abundantly. Treading as you now are, my beloved father, upon the confines of the world of spirits, how little, O how very little! do all the pursuits of mortals appear unto you. Eternity begins to open upon you in its vast importance and deep solemnity. The Judge standeth before the door, and methinks that with the most powerful of all emphasis these searching

words come home to your trembling spirit,—“Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” Solemn question even to the giddy, but still more so to one who is about to put off his tottering tabernacle. May it be your happiness to be able to say, “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.” If I am not deceived, you have been made in some little measure feelingly acquainted with your state as a sinner, and with the unbelief, hardness, and baseness of the human heart, the short-comings of a man’s best services, and the fallacy of attempting to bring anything to Christ but guilt and shame.

Such was my view of your case, when I saw you last. A good man, (in the Gospel sense,) can see no goodness in himself when he comes to border on eternity. Nay, from human works he turns away with disgust: to rely upon them in any wise, is perfect madness; he loves the cross too well for that. May the Lord lead my dear father to view by faith the dear Redeemer, in his complete obedience done in his life, finished by his death and blood; and may—“Whosoever will,”—be brought with sweet power to his soul! May the excellent and suitable invitations of the Gospel, be divinely opened unto him in all their mystery of grace to rebels, until the soul gives way, and, adoring God for the riches of his distinguishing grace, shall go and fall upon that foundation which he has laid in Zion. There may my father enjoy salvation in all its fulness, freeness, suitability, and sweetness; and whilst he receives the mercy, praise the grace.

Do not think I attempt to teach: I have said these things that we might have fellowship with each other, and rejoice that we have been called aside from the unsatisfying pursuits of life, to the savour of the knowledge of Christ, and to look for a better inheritance than this world can afford. As a guilty, ruined, perishing sinner, daily to betake myself to the fountain opened, and to have now and then a little taste of Christ, as the true bread of life,—to have daily access to the Father by Him, to glory only in his cross, and now and then to gain a little communion, is with me at times the grand desideratum of life:

as Mr. John Newton says, at such seasons, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." My principal reason for not writing lately was, because I had no very good news to send; yet sometimes I think it is possible that the Lord may make things much more comfortable in time. He is still, I hope, with me, and leading me on gradually in the ministry, and I hope the end will be well. I preach about six times a week to pretty many hearers. He has said, "In the morning sow thy seed," and "they that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Henry is now getting a great boy; he has been poorly a long time, and has violent bleeding from the nose. I am so circumstanced that it is impossible that I should be able to come over at present. But I hope I can say, that my regard and affection for you all are undiminished. I feel acutely for my dear father, and hope that he will receive the poor tribute of my prayers and tears. That the Lord may condescend to be with you in your present visitation, to supply your wants, and give relief to preserve you from the power of sin and Satan, to take you by the hand, and be with you in life and death, is, I hope, the fervent breathing of one who can only say, farewell. We remain,

Your afflicted children,

EDWARD AND MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, to a *Friend*.

Devizes, Feb. 1826.

I HAVE been dreadfully handled in this place, but I have endeavoured to stand my ground. My principal opponents are —, and against me they have left no stone unturned. If a poor soul gets a morsel under the word, and meets with them, woe be to him! I have never given them any offence, save the offence of the cross; and yet "I am their music."

When I came into Wiltshire, I was well persuaded that there were many professing strong faith, who really had no faith at all. But I have since been made to prove—to my cost—that some of the arrant deceivers, (under a profession,) are such as profess to have "weak faith," whilst,

in point of fact, they have no faith of any kind. Such are tattlers, busy-bodies, talking about their doubts, when they are in no manner of concern about their soul ! Ever learning, and ever tattling, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth. Their religion is picked up, borrowed. Whilst a child of God, sensibly feeling vital religion in his own soul, dreads to open his mouth on the subject, these are always in tune. Believe them, and they are dying for the Gospel, but if it comes as a constant dropping, you will see them drop their heads.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to* MR. *and* MRS. R——Y.

Devizes, April 1826.

. YOUR silence does not obliterate the fond remembrance of past friendship. I hope I shall feel a union to you, and sympathy and interest in your welfare, while the ebbing sands of life are running out. There may be a little blight when the bearing of the tree is not affected,—a momentary apparent suspension, when the root of union remains the same. My wife desires to be most warmly remembered to you both ; we often talk of you, indeed you have not been out of our minds many waking hours together. When at Drayton I had my daily cross, but it was not sufficient to keep down rampant nature. My Father has not yet laid by his rod ; but He corrects me in measure, and for my profit, that I may be a partaker of his holiness. Sometimes I can see his hand, and sometimes his heart, but often neither ; I don't believe it is his will that I should always *see* my way. To feel his hand take hold of mine is a consolation : “ He leads the blind.” In his providence to me, He often opens his mouth in parables, and He must explain them, for I cannot. *Faith*, says, “ This he will do, in the best place, at the best time, and in the best way ; ” but full often my unbelief and carnality, prompt my vile heart to fret against the Lo d. If my coming to Drayton was shrouded in mystery, my coming to Devizes has been more so. The opposition I have met

with here, has been tenfold what I met with there. Oh, methinks I could tell a tale of woe ! But I have not had one stripe too many, nor one stroke too heavy, nor one foe more than was appointed me. The situation in which I now stand is excellent for preventing a settlement upon the lees. The vessel is often shook up. There are seasons in which I feel the wretched dregs of my own heart,—the waters are bitter, but sometimes God bows down in me the loftiest of man, and dissolves me at the throne of his grace, or at the foot of his cross. Never was my soul so shaken out of human defences, and never had I less of the human arm to lean upon. This is as it should be, but the way to it is hard indeed. There are seasons in which my God is still sensibly with me, and says: “Fear not, I am with thee, and *no man shall set on thee to hurt thee.*” Opposition shown to the ministry, brings me to a throne of grace, and helps me to agonize before my Father ; it makes me hold temporals with a slack hand, but my God is the fast grip of the hand of faith—“I will not let thee go except thou bless me:” it draws down from my Father’s heart rich consolations, and gradually carries me on in my testimony. I believe this with God’s blessing would prove an open door. Some of my friends are hopeful : I am at this moment indifferent about it, believing that God will yet appear at the right time and place, because he has made me faithful to my soul and to theirs, and is still *with me, and with a few of us.* We are both out of church fellowship.

A little leaven leavens the whole lump : about six or eight people are the source of all my troubles in this interest. Nay, perhaps it originated in one individual.

EDWARD BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, to *her Husband.*

Devizes, Aug. 14th, 1826.

I FEEL very thankful to learn that the Lord does in some measure support your mind. I cannot but participate in

all your joys and sorrows ; and even when I am down myself, to know that you, my dear Edward, have a taste of His grace, or a glimpse of his countenance, affords unspeakable relief to my mind : but oh ! what a path of tribulation is life ! how often the scene changes. When I get a little comfort how soon I lose it again. Well, bless the Lord, it is the way to the kingdom, for he has said it is through *much* tribulation ye must enter. A little longer, my dear husband, and we shall have done with these temporary separations, and shall be at home, even at our Father's house, to part no more. I sometimes comfort myself in the reflection, that although I am shut out from the means, yet the throne of grace is open for the outcast, the burdened, and the guilty sinner ; and when I am favoured to come in this case, and He is graciously pleased to give me an audience, all is well. But, woe is me ! there are times when I am scared away by Satan and unbelief, and I dare not open my mouth wide in supplication to the Lord, for fear he should answer me with the cross ; so heavy do I feel the weight of his hand at times, that all I can say is—"Stay thy rough wind in the day of thine east wind, and afflict me not above measure, O God." And, bless his holy name, he has declared that he metes out the afflictions of his people, and will not suffer them to have more than they can bear, but will with the temptation make a way of escape,

Your affectionate wife,

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

Devizes, Sept. 1826.

MY DEAR EDWARD,

Your letter has given me much uneasiness I have been very ill since Sunday with violent pains in my head. The uncertainty respecting our joining you is very trying. Do not any longer separate yourself from your poor wife, and helpless children ; my heart bleeds to hear them cry, "When shall we go to my father ?" Oh,

remember that I have not the strength of an angel : my poor suffering bosom has been the seat of distress since you first left us. I have concealed it from every one but God, but it is now overcharged, and must have vent. Bear with me, my dear Edward, but my life and peace are so much bound in you, that when you are absent the world has no charms in it, society cannot please ; all nature fades, and my soul sickens at the sight, only delighting to seek a melancholy retreat, and absorb itself in thinking about you. Flatter me no more with delusions, but come, I beseech you, and let us cast ourselves upon God I am like a poor maniac, unfit for anything ; and the dear children are distressed to see me so, but I cannot overcome it. Do let me hear from you immediately, saying when you think of our being all together again. Paul did not hesitate to preach wherever he had a door of utterance, and was made useful to the edification of the church ; and although I do not sanction what you object to, yet it is better to be the oppressed than the oppressor.

Your affectionate wife,

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

CHAPTER XV.

[1826—1830.]

POTTON—UNFAVOURABLE IMPRESSION OF—MINISTRATIONS BLESSED TO
MISS B. H.—HER HAPPY DEATH—LETTERS OF MRS. B.—CHURCH
INVITES HIM FOR TWELVE MONTHS—GOES TO DEVIZES FOR HIS
FAMILY—OPENS A SCHOOL AT POTTON—TWINS BORN—SPIRITUAL
TRIALS—VISITS WELWYN.

CIRCUMSTANCES which had recently occurred in the Baptist Church at Potton, were unfavourable to the reception of a new minister. A preacher who was a favourite with some of the outside hearers had been removed by the church members, consequently many of the congregation were not in a mood to receive a stranger very graciously. I, on my part, had no sooner entered the town, than I conceived a most singular and unaccountable prejudice against it. The deportment of the people on the Sabbath during service, and their restlessness of manner, did not tend to diminish this feeling: yet there were a few whose hearts seemed united to me from the first; and although this did not reconcile me to Potton, nor obliterate the impression which the coolness of my first reception there produced, yet I recall their friendship with warm Christian affection. Amongst these ought particularly to be mentioned a friend who, from his spiritual discernment, was called the "Parson-weigher." He was a man of humble calling, he received me cordially on my first Sabbath, and has ever since proved a staunch and faithful friend. I trust I shall ever remember the name of William Fisher with a glow of real Christian affection, as long as I live in this world.

His immediate and warm espousal of my cause, however, was anything but agreeable to my feelings; under the unhappy and growing distaste of my mind to Potton, it would have pleased my carnal will better had no one moved in my behalf. I lived in hopes, especially during the early part of my visit, when but little kindness or hospitality was shown me, of not being required beyond the month's invitation; and I used to go and sit under a tree in Mr. Freshwater's garden, and there entreat the Lord with tears and sighs, that he would not cast my lot in that place.

These feelings of prejudice against Potton, were very wrong in the sight of God, for no circumstances can justify such a frame of spirit, nor can I at all account for it; but a mist had come over me, and prevented my discerning the hand of God in sending me there; the people I had just left were fresh in my remembrance, and my heart still clung warmly to them. I imagined I was brought to Potton from necessity, and temporarily only—no other door being then open, and I hoped to see that closed, in order that I might be removed elsewhere. In the pulpit I was at no loss for matter, and felt that what I said was truth; but I missed the Lord's sweet presence, I was conscious of *His helping* me, but the comforting mercy was withheld.

There was a large congregation, yet to my mind but few of them heard well; from my own experience and observation of much that I saw there, I judged that a dark cloud hung over the place.

By degrees the people drew more towards me, invitations to their houses became more frequent, and my dear wife, pained at our separation, urged the removal of our family from Devizes. Against all this, as it looked like *settling* at Potton, I held out for the reasons already given. I remember on one occasion letting fall to my friend Fisher, as we were walking from chapel, some intimation of the conflict of my

mind, and my repugnance to Potton. He paused, stood still, put his thumbs in his waistcoat pocket—as his manner was on occasions more than ordinarily impressive—and delivered himself in the following fashion: “I tell you what, friend, you may say what you like, but you are the Potton parson, and mind you don’t go and play the Jonah!”

I loved the man, but I should be ashamed to tell the irritation and Jonah-like angry feelings excited by this unwelcome prediction; yet the words of my true friend sunk deep, for he was no light-weighted man, and I believe they had a strong influence in calming and keeping me passive. Remember, reader, I do not attempt to justify such a state of mind, it was nothing less than horrible rebellion, and yet at the time I was wholly unconscious of it.

But it pleased God to relieve this dark and gloomy path by some bright gleams of light. About a fortnight after my first arrival, I called by request at the house of Mr. H——, in the Market-place. I went with reluctance, and with the feelings of a stranger: after some preliminary conversation, I was invited for the purpose of family prayer into another room, the sick chamber of the youngest daughter of the family, Miss B. H——. I had no sooner seen her, than I was touched with sympathy and commiseration. My heart yearned over her soul; I could not suppress the thought, “This surely is a fading flower; she is not long for this world; I wonder how it is with her soul.” I was immediately thrown into great anxiety about her. On her account, I selected to read at family worship the tenth chapter of Romans; I felt much of the power of the words, and afterwards engaged in prayer. I concealed my feelings, for I desired for her far more than my lips uttered. It was to me a very solemn and profitable time, and I felt such a soul-union to that young person, as I think

nothing but the grace of God could make. On my return home, a strong wrestling spirit of prayer came upon me for her salvation; I resolved to keep it to myself, but this was not the will of God. I soon received an urgent summons from my patient, which I obeyed, as I dare not neglect my Master's work. On this occasion, I carefully examined the state of soul of the poor invalid. I set before her the condition we are all in by nature, and the deep necessity of our being born again. To this she listened with close attention, and drank in eagerly what I said; she seemed fully aware of the fatal nature of her disorder (consumption), and appeared under a deep concern about her soul, and desirous to be honestly and faithfully taught her true condition. The result of a long and serious conversation with her on that occasion, was to leave a strong persuasion in my mind that a good work was begun in her, and that she much needed a teacher. I could truly say before God, as Paul did, that I "travailed as in birth, that Christ might be formed in her" soul.

From that day I had a general invitation from the family to visit the dying girl, and as I found the Lord's presence in the house, I did not neglect my charge, and was, once or twice, even summoned in the middle of the night to attend to her. The burden lay continually on my mind until her soul was delivered. Whatever other helps she may have had, the Lord certainly led me to accompany her through a work of thorough conviction, and thence to her being raised to hope, and finally to her being brought fairly upon Christ the Rock, until she was so enlarged as to break out in long and fervent strains of praise to God for all his mercies; and although a transient cloud passed over her soul, yet God again brought her out into the light to praise Him.

When at last the messenger of death was come for

her, I heard her burst forth in these words—"Lord Jesus, receive my soul!"

Thus I saw her safely launched, and have never since had one question about the reality of that work of grace, for I felt that her's was the death-bed of a saint. She was my first-fruits unto Christ in Potton, and her memory is pleasant to me still; for "the memory of the just is blessed." I preached her funeral discourse one week day, when our chapel was full to overflowing. The text was Luke xxiii. 42, 43—"And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Mr. G——y, of M——, was then present (and this was the only discourse which he ever heard me preach); at my request he spoke over the grave.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

Devizes, August 1826.

. . . . I PASSED an uneasy night, not having received a letter from you, and my fearful heart foreboded the worst; but as I was walking in the garden, with Joseph in my arms, and poor little affectionate Elizabeth playing beside me, my thoughts pondering on, and troubled about you, the postman brought your letter. May the Lord fill my heart with gratitude! He is better to me than all my fears. Often have I proved his goodness, and yet how often do I question it! O my infirmities, how close they cleave! Would that I could trust everything with God! But, my dear Edward, I feel that my poor soul needs that instrumental sustenance from the Rock of ages—that building upon Him which I have oftentimes enjoyed in the sanctuary; and whilst I believe that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day, yet I still feel that I want the blessings of his house as much as my daily food—yea, my heart panteth for God, even for the living God,—when shall I come and appear before Him?

How often do I long for my soul to be brought out of prison, that I may praise his name in the gates of the daughter of Zion—that I may once more hear the silver trumpet of the Gospel blown, and liberty to the captives proclaimed! Yet I would say, Let patience have her perfect work. I longed for you to come here when you went to Bedfordshire, but I durst not urge it lest it should be productive of evil. I hope that I shall be favoured to see and to confess that the Lord has done all things well! O may the Lord spare both you, my dear Edward, and us, and cause us soon to meet in health and safety, and provide us a *home* against the time we want one. What a mercy it is that we are in his keeping—that both our darkness and our light are portioned out by the Almighty, and that all his dispensations towards us shall work together for good, how mysterious soever they may appear. What a covenant God has done can never be wrong! O, then, may we be favoured to bow beneath his hand, to kiss the rod, and welcome all his mind.

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

Devizes, October 1826.

. . . . I WAS very thankful to hear that God had been gracious to prosper your labours in any measure; may we both be laid low at his feet underneath such a manifestation of his divine favour. I sought the text you preached from in Luke, which, as I read it, was accompanied with so much power to my mind that it melted me down before his throne; my soul was filled with gratitude, and I was enabled to adore his sovereign mercy, and to thank Him for bending your steps towards Potton, for if you have been made the honoured instrument of turning one soul unto righteousness, it is worth the labours of a whole life—it is a little of the fulfilment of that passage in Daniel. May the Lord still go on to realize it unto you. Perhaps we shall be led to see that all the malice of your enemies has but furthered God's gracious designs towards you.

You wish to know how I am in health,—indeed, my dear Edward, *your absence* often makes me low in mind, and ill in body too. I think I have tasted something of the lonesome widow's state within the last few months; I feel more sympathy for such an one than ever I did before; I think if *that* were my lot I should not long survive it. The poor children are pretty well—they remember you many a time in a day. They are very affectionate, poor things; when they see me afflicted they partake of my sorrows. . . .

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

My dear wife had been extremely anxious that we should settle at Potton, but the prospect had appeared to me a very gloomy one. We were six in family, and my salary was only 65*l.* per annum; and my unbelieving heart led me to tell her I feared we should want bread. Indeed, so seemed to think our hostess, who (on the day of our entering the lodgings at that place), on seeing one child after another troop in, burst into the exclamation—"May the *ravens feed you!*" I have often called to mind that striking exclamation.

When the rent, rates, and taxes were paid, we had fourpence-halfpenny a day each to live upon. Potton was not, therefore, the land of *promise*.

Before I quitted that town, my family had increased to *nine* children; yet even there, the Lord never suffered us to want any good thing. He invariably made a way for us. I had much sickness in my family, which, in addition to the trials, entailed many expenses. Two or three families in the town were kind to us, and also some in the neighbourhood. But during the last years of our stay at Potton, the Lord graciously raised up the Lakenheath friends to help us through, and the assistance which *they* rendered us was wonderful!

I would on no account be unmindful of, or ungrateful for, the smallest mercies which the Lord bestowed upon us; nor to any instrument which He has seen good to employ, would I be unthankful. I am far less than the least of all his mercies. He has often spread me such a table in Potton, that I have been compelled with adoring gratitude to say with the poet—

“ In sight of all my foes,
Thou dost my table spread;
My cup with blessings overflows,
Thine oil anoints my head.”

If a detailed account were given, it would show how graciously the Lord opened his hand towards us; and that, though scores of times we were reduced to a few pence, our deliverances through his mercy were almost incredible.

At the end of the month, October, 1826, the members of the church renewed their invitation for a year, which, with all my aversion to settling at Potton, I did not venture to decline, nor dare to “break the hedge;” I therefore proceeded to Devizes, and brought my family with me to Potton, a distance of 138 miles. This expense (about 17*l.*) was defrayed out of 18*l.* which was still left of the money handed to me at Devizes at my dismissal.

The feelings with which I parted from my friends there may be imagined. Good old James Dalman, before mentioned (he was a deacon and a preacher, a poor but holy man of God), stood in the street to take leave of me, the tears flowing down his venerable face. He is now in heaven, and had, I have been informed, a glorious death-bed. There were several others with him, whom I was never more to see in the flesh. My heart was too full to speak, or its emotions would have found utterance in these words:—“My kind and beloved friends, farewell!

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et Person. I was however, very far from
had for the time being, passed my life, which I
are and a constant and even improved in my
re. That I feared and trembled against the dis-
ation was not all: but in the very act of
a position will wonder that I was nervous and
appy. Such discipline tends to depress the system
if long continued imparts to the preacher a heavy
inanimate delivery and tone of voice. An "an-
odor in bonds." has a very serious and weighty
e. Let those who have had to discharge it, bear
out in my assertion. This bondage, naturally
ugh, had its effect also upon the intercourse of the
tor with the people: yet after I had laboured

[illegible]

In the year 1825, it pleased God to increase my family: my dear wife was long ill, and between intervals, I retreated to call upon God for her deliverance, and then endeavoured to calm the agitation of my mind by occupying myself in the garden during this period of anxiety. I was attempting to weed a bed of onions, but my distress for my dear wife was so great, that I scarcely knew what I pulled up. In the midst of this occupation, and after what seemed to me a very long time, I saw the nurse come smiling towards me, and in

among them for two years, there was a feeling of confidence and regard engendered on both sides; and that there was not greater intimacy to be attributed not so much to them as to my own.

But let it not be supposed that this was indifference. I never could cease praying for the people; I may say that I pleaded for them day and night. Owing to the interruptions I alluded to at home, I sought retirement where there was one, the road to Everton, (the road Mr. Berridge ended his days,) which I travelled every week-night in the year, and sometimes on the day. My best seasons in prayer at Potton were met with on that road. There, with God, and with no other witness than the woods and fields, I have poured out my soul to Him hundreds, nay, thousands of times. Of this I can witness, for He kept me at it. There, in the much darkness, I have with many ear-aching cries, and tears, travailed for my own success of my ministry,—for our little congregation,—for the children of God in the neighbourhood,—for the Christian friends at a distance,—for the Church of Christ at large,—and for my country. "Other men laboured," says our Lord, "and ye entered into *their labours*." Yet his words were but little thought of. Men who are dismissed have been, are usually lightly esteemed, rather as the offscouring of the earth than as the people of Christ. God will have our most effectual labours *in secret*.

But "Thou tellest my wanderings: thou puttest my tears into thy bottle: are they not thine?—" Ps. lvi. 8. I have sometimes the pleasure of such reflection on that road that dear

CHAPTER XVI.

[1831.]

POTTON SCHOOL CLOSED—"IN DEATHS OFT"—ACCOUNT OF FRIENDS DEPARTED—WARNINGS OF "AN EFFECTUAL DOOR AND MANY ADVERSARIES"—LAKENHEATH.

AFTER my school at Potton had been open between four and five years, it fell off (in consequence of the opening of three others,) to a dozen pupils. I consulted with my friends in this dilemma, who agreed to raise my salary to 80*l.* per annum, and to give me liberty to go out now and then for a few Sabbaths. I then closed my school.

In this year (1831), it pleased God to remove one of my hearers by death,—a servant girl to whom the Lord had blessed my preaching, and whom I had baptized soon after my arrival at Potton. This was a severe blow, for Jane Emery was a choice Christian, and a most warm and hearty friend and fellow-helper to me in my ministerial labours, and strove to hold up my hands in the work by her prayers. Often have I seen her countenance beam with joy, while she was listening to the word preached, and have heard her deliver many a sweet testimony of God's dealings with her soul. She reminded me more of John Bunyan's school, than of the general class of readers of the present day: but the Lord called her home.

While I was preaching her funeral sermon, my mind was impressed with a strong desire that the Lord would be pleased to fill up her vacant place, which, in

answer to my prayers, he did: her successor somewhat resembled her.

I saw many a fair young flower fall at Potton, and occasionally more than one in the same family. The death of Miss B. H——, of consumption, has been mentioned. In this year (1831) her sister, E. H——, was attacked with the same insidious disease. She had previously to her illness made a profession of religion, and had joined the Baptist church at Gamlingay; but it pleased God on her sick-couch to teach her much more of her own heart than she had ever known before. She sent for me. I examined and probed closely into her soul's state. The Lord had been there before me, she therefore stood my testing well; and, feeling assured that there was divine life in her, I endeavoured by every means to administer comfort. I visited her often, conversed, read, and commented on the Scriptures, and prayed with her; and these means were blessed to her profit. She used to say that she had never known what a sinful and polluted nature she had, until the Lord had laid his afflicting hand upon her; and added—"I need turning inside out, and rinsing through and through in the blood of the Saviour." Finally she was fairly brought to trust in Christ for all things, and to enjoy a lively gospel hope, comfort, and peace. She died a safe, happy, and peaceful death. Her last words were—"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" I preached her funeral sermon from 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

It was now my lot, as a minister, to be "in deaths oft." I had two friends who had joined the church not long after I came to Potton—Mr. and Mrs. Freeman; with them I had lived in close Christian communion. They were suddenly attacked with fever—both together. The husband, though a law-

delivered citizen of Zion, was often in sensible bondage under the law, which contracted him, and gave to his character a resemblance of austerity, which was foreign to it; but they were both of them strictly honest, straightforward, industrious, and God-fearing people; and, in fact, their principles were not quite broad enough for the religious taste of the neighbourhood. Yet, from my own knowledge of them, derived from an intimate personal acquaintance, I always considered them to belong to that number "of whom the world is not worthy." I visited them in their sickness; the wife was insensible, the husband singing—"Eternal joy! eternal joy!" They died both together, of the same disease, and were buried in one grave. They were *very dear to me*, though not much esteemed by the carnal world. As I stood delivering the funeral address over their ashes, my limbs trembled, for it was to me a solemn visitation!

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

(During one of his ministerial visits.)

MY DEAREST EDWARD,

Potton, 1831.

I am glad to find that you arrived safe at ——. I have had many fears about you, but, the Lord be praised, He is better to me than all my fears; *they* throw me into bondage, but He delivers my soul out of trouble. I need not tell you that your absence costs me my peace; many sleepless nights and weeping hours I spend, and at times feel quite unable to cast my burden upon the Lord, although I so well know by past experience that it is He alone who can bear me up, and bring me through. Yet there are seasons when I am driven to seek the Lord at his throne, and then I find a little resignation given me which stills my troubled breast. You will tell me that it

is childish to be so enslaved by my feelings. Well, it may be so, but your affectionate heart will forbid you to chide, when you recollect that my earthly happiness has been centered in you from my very childhood I know that it is your desire to go to Manchester, and I should wish to desire what you desire ; if you go, may the blessing of the Lord be upon you, and may Israel's God go with you. If you touch at Drayton, visit the grave of our little dear Maria. May the Lord give you a prosperous journey, and may He lead you out in prayer for my soul, that it may not lie cleaving to the dust, but that I may be lifted out of the things of time and sense, and led to seek enjoyment in the Lord alone.

Your most affectionate wife,
 MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

Some time after I had relinquished my school and obtained permission from the friends at Potton to go out occasionally to preach, while on the Sutton Road one day, pleading with the Lord concerning my ministry, I had these words sent to me—"For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." 1 Cor. xvi. 9.

As these words certainly came to my mind, and as I then judged with divine power, I hailed with joy the promise of "a great and effectual door;" but the latter part, the "*many adversaries*," occasioned me no little perplexity.

Who were these adversaries? and whence were they to come?

I had known enough of Satan's temptations to be convinced that *he* was an adversary, but it appeared to me by the text that MEN were intended; of wicked men, as opponents, I then made no account; at Potton we were peaceable, and my good name as a servant of Christ had not then been impeached; the interpretation of that portion of the passage, I was there-

fore compelled to leave, but I believed that both portions would certainly be fulfilled.

Shortly after this I accepted an invitation to supply during two Sabbaths at Lakenheath. This church had no pastor, nor any preaching, but for about fourteen Sabbaths in the year; at their meetings for the most part they had reading and prayer. Yet that was no fallow ground; I thought I had never before seen such a people. They appeared full of life and animation. Much taken up with the dealings of God with their souls, one and another relating how God had arrested them in their sins, how they were raised to hope, how they sunk again in fears, and then how the Lord had delivered them. Their whole path, with its variations, they detailed in a manner which showed me that they knew what they were talking about. Indeed, I was astonished at the Lord's manifest gracious work there. Some were under first awakenings, others raised to hope, some brought to the birth, others brought forth; there were some in the dark, others in the light; some in temptation, and others in the experience of deliverance from it; some in the conflict with indwelling sin, others in the enjoyment of solid peace. There were souls afflicted and comforted, in bonds and at liberty; souls silent, and singing, diseased, and in health. Here were babes and sucklings, young men and fathers; lambs and sheep, pelicans of the wilderness, and nightingales; owls of the desert, and young doves; wandering swallows and chirping sparrows; chattering cranes and merry larks.

The sight was glorious; and though the picture should appear to some to be too highly coloured, yet it is but a faithful representation of the scene as it appeared to my eyes on my early visits.

A curious incident connected with my first journey there may be mentioned. The occasion of it was

this:—My invitation had been sent by Mr. J. Smith, of Lakenheath; at first I paid little attention to it, and returned a refusal; but a second letter, received a week later, in which he gave me some outlines of his religious experience, so found its way to my heart, that I agreed to go over; but my visit was now unavoidably postponed another week, through the sudden illness of my wife. This attack having passed off, I left home, and was met by Mr. John Smith at Mildenhall, whence he drove me across, a distance of six miles. As we approached Lakenheath, I thought it looked unpromising; it seemed but a few scattered houses placed upon a heath, quite a small village, and very isolated. Fearing that my journey would prove a fruitless one, I made some exclamation of surprise at the aspect of the place; in reply to which my companion assured me that there were many of God's children there. Meanwhile, some of the people, on their side, had not been prepossessed by my apparent reluctance to come among them, particularly Mrs. —, Mr. Smith's sister. As we entered the village, her children were on the look-out for us, and called to their mother to come and see their uncle coming with the preacher. She said to herself, "I don't care to look at him;" when in an instant the Lord sent to her these words with power—"Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Immediately she came forward to the window, and bowed to me as I passed, in a manner that seemed to say, "Thrice welcome to Lakenheath." This story she afterwards told me herself.

In the house of Mr. John Smith's brother Francis, I was hospitably entertained. On the Sabbath, I found the chapel full, and even the aisles crowded. I felt much enjoyment in preaching, and the people in hearing; and now I was in danger of supposing that *all* my hearers were of the fold of God, instead

of limiting their number as I had been tempted to do before. When I had done my work among them, they contributed largely and cheerfully, and pressed me to repeat my visit frequently.

For several years afterwards, I visited this people at their own request twice every year. I felt a great concern for their spiritual and temporal welfare, for they appeared to me like sheep without an under-shepherd. And I had often cause to bless God for bringing me among them. Many a blessing in my own soul have I received there; and the Lord so touched their hearts, that great as were the wants of my large family, they were all amply provided for by their supplies. During the remainder of my residence at Potton, about three years, I found food for both body and soul at Lakenheath.

At a later period, I became sensible of a less favourable spiritual condition in the people,—of a declension from that thriving and blessed state which I have described above. Yet for a long time, my ministry appeared to be blessed there to many of them, and if there was one corner of my heart warmer than another for any congregation upon earth, that people certainly had it.

Among those with whom I walked to the House of God in company, I may mention particularly Mr. John Smith, senior, a deacon of the church, and a blessed man of God. In his early youth he had led a very ungodly life, but the Lord had called him many years before my acquaintance with him commenced. The history of his conversion and his religious experience, was very striking and instructive, and when I knew him there was something patriarchal in his character and position among that people. He was a man favoured to live very near to God, and in the enjoyment of many a little visit from him during the week. His prayers, example,

and advice, were of great value; he conducted their public reading together, and was a kind father among them, especially to the poor and needy, and was a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Some of William Huntington's published letters are addressed to him. Mr. Smith is now gone to his everlasting rest.

His two sons, Francis and John, followed in their father's steps. The former was a man weak in faith, seldom rising to more than a little light, a little hope, a little comfort; but a very valuable person, remarkable for the tenderness of his conscience, and his love of the Lord's people, and in my opinion he was a precious man of God.

His brother John was a plain, simple, honest soul, but well able to give an account of the Lord's dealings with him. They were both loving and faithful friends to me. I shall have occasion hereafter to return to the history of the two brothers. Besides these, there was also Mr. William Newton, an aged man, but one favoured to walk as closely with God as any spiritual companion I have ever had. He, too, has entered into rest. All those were men whose loss in the church of God is not easily repaired. With these and many others at Lakenheath, I have passed many a pleasant hour, and for the church there in general, I have often felt that I could go through fire and water for them, because they were dear to me. And though they, like ourselves, had their infirmities, yet when the sweet anointing flowed upon them, (and I have often seen their faces shine with it,) they were indeed a blessed people. May the Lord grant them his presence and blessing as in the former days!

darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?" Jer. ii. 31.

The power of God so accompanied these words, that my heart, my state, and my life were laid open. I was at once effectually stopped and reproved, all my rebellious feelings were immediately swept away, and a conviction of the truth, the force, and admirable suitableness of the words to my bad case, laid my soul prostrate, and made me to justify God in all his dealings with me, and wholly and entirely condemn myself and my own ways, all my life through. I was made to feel that I had been guilty throughout of singularly monstrous and aggravated heart-sins against Him; that, as an outcast and refuse of the human race, my rich reward would have been in hell for ever; that the sharpest dealings I had received from the hand of God were in reality sparing mercies; and I blessed and praised Him for his goodness and forbearance to me in these very corrections. Thus Jonah, peevish Jonah, was once more broken down; my sense of self-abasement and my whole feelings might be summed up in one word, "Behold, I am vile."

All this came upon me as gently as the dew comes upon the tender herb, but the Divine influence kept on increasing until it came in like floods upon the dry ground. Wonder, O heavens! and be astonished, O earth! at the goodness displayed to me, a sinner above the most sinful. The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, thus gradually broke in upon my soul, in manifested mercy, Almighty sovereign mercy, and gloriously free! My soul sensibly felt each moment *His coming in*, and who shall describe it? "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the Gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Exod. xv. 11. "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power; thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the

enemy." Exod. xv. 6. "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." Exod. xv. 18.

Now he filled my cup to overflowing with his heart-softening, heart-breaking mercy. Once more, he showed me that he had cast all my dreadful sins and vile rebellions into the depths of the sea; that in Christ Jesus I was still all fair. Out of heaven my God and Father smiled upon me, and showed that between him and me there was nothing but love and peace. The living waters flowed into my soul. "He poured the water out of his buckets, and showed himself higher than Agag." Numb. xxiv. 7. Here he taught me more than ever I had known before of the *precious living influences* of the Holy Spirit. I care not who may sneer at these expressions; I *know* that he *does* send a plentiful rain, that confirms his inheritance when it is weary. And I do solemnly declare, that from that time more especially, I have dearly prized the *Spirit's work* upon man's heart, and his sweet and delightful *communion* in, and with the soul, more than any language of mine can express.

Thus he abundantly watered my soul, and proved really and powerfully that he was my God. And for my own part, I should not mind being reproached, slighted, neglected, and forsaken, by bad or by good men, if the Lord were very often thus to favour me. But this was not all that my gracious Lord did for me on that occasion; as Satan and my own heart had set before me all the dark and gloomy shades of my life's history, so now my God condescended to bring back to me and display in order, the gleams of sunshine of all my paths, from the first dawnings of his heavenly light upon me, until that moment. And he at the same time exhibited to me the shadows and adversities of it in such a light, that I saw they had all been for my good. He showed me that he had loved me from everlasting, that he had picked me up,

and borne me throughout all my journeyings and wanderings, and had been *with me* in them all. He recalled to me the seasons when the Sun of righteousness had broken through the clouds, and burst upon my soul from time to time; showed me how he had appeared for me by his providence in straits; had made *all* things to work together for my good, and had saved me by those very dispensations which I had most dreaded.

Thus he made darkness light, and crooked things straight. He reconciled me to my lot, and proved to me that he Himself was the most excellent interpreter; and that Satan and my own unbelief, *misinterpreted* and terribly distorted all that they were professing to portray. Thus, out of the depths of misery I was brought up and made completely happy, contented as a prince of his people; now I no longer envied any one. My God was with me, and my heart was with my God. My long lost friend was come again, and all was well! Yet I saw not one good action, or thought, in the review of my whole life. God the Father, Christ the Saviour, and the Holy Spirit the Comforter, were all in all with me. And I desired but to remain for ever in such a frame, and to love, serve, and adore my God, with increasing devotedness and fervour. I had nothing to do but weep with holy joy and love, and praise my God, a work which my heart, I found, could better execute than my lips.

During the whole of this visitation I was pursuing my walk, but in what direction I went, or how far, I never knew; the throng of the crowded city was to me no interruption, my mind was wholly absorbed. At the end of three hours I found it was time to make my way homeward, and I returned to my host and hostess another man.

This blessed visitation continued with little inter-

ruption for about five weeks, and indeed it was long before I sank again so low. The Lord so graciously favoured me in my soul during the next four or five years, that I began to think my name was "Hephzibah, and my land Beulah."

On the ensuing Thursday evening, I preached at Zoar Chapel from the words: "Wherefore the law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith; but after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." Now Christ, my blessed Master, stood sensibly by me, so that I was no longer a captive prisoner, as I had always been at Potton. Yet I did not mention my recent deliverance, but left the Lord's people to find it out. This I decided on after due deliberation, for fear of being robbed of the enjoyment,—a misfortune which had once before happened to me through an injudicious communicativeness.

Nevertheless, I was not without testimonies to my ministry at Zoar Chapel. After returning home on the same Thursday evening, my host, who had been sitting at table very reserved and thoughtful, at last broke silence by saying, "That latterly they had had several preachers whom the people liked best at first; but, my friend," said he, "I do not find it so with you, I like your preaching better and better: and as you appeared much cast down last Sabbath day, I think it right to tell you that I believe your ministry will stand and wear. I have this night been solemnly blessed under it, and some of the old Jews get on well with you. I am sure the discourse you delivered to-night was one much needed in our place, and one or two of us have agreed to ask you to preach from the same text next Sabbath morning."

I received similar encouragements from others of the spiritual Israel there, and I may add, that during my stay, the congregation increased. They requested

me to prolong my visit among them for two Sabbaths, but a prior engagement at Brighton called me away.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his Wife.*

November 5, 1832.

I REMEMBER that this is your birthday. May the Lord grant you, if it be his blessed will, many happy returns. Long life, health, and prosperity to my partner, in both sorrow and comfort ; and when you have done with this world, may you, under a glorious convoy of Holy Angels, enter the haven of everlasting bliss, to be for ever with your dear, adorable Lord, to assist in the solemn convocation. Crown Him ! my dear Maria, crown Him Lord of all ! for Jesus is worthy, He is worthy—Halleluia, Halleluia ! Amen.

This morning my kind Master has a little softened the old rebel's heart, as I was thinking over the mysterious Providence, that brought such a poor tool to speak in London. Oh, that ever He should permit me to raise my feeble voice in his most glorious name ! Oh ! wonder of wonders. The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted.

I am, my dearest Maria,
Your most loving Husband,
EDWARD BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

Potton.

. . . I CAN say for myself, that the preaching we have just heard, has had the effect of making me very thankful for the pasture which the Lord, in his rich mercy, has seen good to grant unto my soul. Oh, may I be enabled to prize it more than I have ever yet done, and to praise Him

more fervently for bestowing upon such an unworthy wretch, as I feel myself to be, the great blessing of an unctious, unadulterated, Gospel ministry. How beautiful to my soul does the pure, spiritual, simple, yet powerful truth of God appear, when contrasted with man's fine harangues,—with his tragic pomp, his boasted talents, and his self-importance ! My soul cannot feed upon such trash, and I bless the Lord for it. Yet with such dainties was our table spread on ——— night ; and I cannot tell you how my soul loathed it, for so arrogant did the preacher appear, both when professing to pray, and to preach, that I could not bring myself to believe that he had the fear of God in his heart. However, when I got home, I could not help feeling very thankful that the gracious Lord had taught me to know the joyful sound,—the voice of Christ in the Gospel ! to hear it now and then with *power*, to love it, to follow it, and not to hearken to the voice of strangers. It is unspeakable mercy, that, although the Lord does from day to day show me more and more of my own vile and helpless condition by nature, yet that he does now and then make me to hear the voice of my Shepherd,—to know it, and to love it. This is indeed a mercy, for he has said : “ Blessed are the people that *know* the joyful sound ; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.” What, though I am walking in darkness and have no light, yet I believe that the Lord will shine again. I believe the promise is mine in all its richness, and in all its fulness. He is a God that cannot lie,—his word is all my trust, nor shall I trust his word in vain. . . .

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

On the 25th November, 1832, I visited the chapel in Church-street, Brighton. There, also, I found a people highly favoured. The Lord was with me in secret and in public. I found there many precious souls, with whom I had sweet communion, and I

received very many testimonies *verbally*, and by *letter*, to the Lord's power accompanying the Word.

One Sabbath evening, however, while in the pulpit, and during the second hymn, a little cloud came over my mind; and I became oppressed by the apprehension that I should not be able to get on well in speaking to the people; but just as I was about to give out my text, the Lord sent these words, which sweetly bound me up—"That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." 1 Tim. iii. 15. That night I was favoured with a precious season in my own soul, and I was credibly informed that three backsliding children had been restored under that discourse. This I would mention to the honour of God, who, I have reason to think, abundantly blessed my labours, both on that visit and on a subsequent one of five weeks, to the people, especially the more tried parts of his family. And if I might measure their profit under the word by their *generosity* to me afterwards, they certainly appreciated me highly.

It was thus that it pleased God to begin to fulfil the first part of his promise of opening to me a "great and effectual door." From Brighton I returned to Potton and to my family, in December 1832.

I must not omit to mention an illness which my dear wife had at Potton, because of the instruction which my soul thereby received from the Lord. The attack was of an inflammatory nature, and danger being apprehended, a second medical opinion was called in. After being copiously bled, she appeared so exhausted as to have scarcely any life left in her. I knelt down beside her bed to engage in prayer with, and for her; and instantly, as I began,

the Lord broke down my soul with these words—“Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.” Ps. cvii. 17.

How often have I longed for the power of uttering and making known to my brethren what I *then* saw in that word *fools*! But this I found impossible.

At that moment the Lord gave us both such a blessed season in prayer, and so humbled and softened our souls, that I *felt* persuaded my dear wife would be restored, and told her so. She began to amend from that time, and soon regained her usual health.

Another effectual door shortly appeared to be opened to me. An invitation was unexpectedly sent to me from Wolverhampton, a circumstance which greatly pleased my dear wife. I supplied during four Sabbaths. There seemed a great lack of divine life and truth in the neighbourhood, and in that sense it was a dull one, and such I still consider it. Yet the little congregation in John-street was not uninteresting; as I shall have occasion to mention it again more particularly, I will only now say that I experienced a close union of heart to several among them, which I believe was mutual. I was touched by the circumstance of three persons waiting for me at the end of a street, as I was about leaving ~~the~~ town, and in a most earnest manner entreating me to come over and remain among them. This incident, apparently slight in itself, made a deeper impression upon me than many might understand. I told them that I was entirely at the Lord's disposal, and that their wiser course was to present their request before Him.

At the beginning of this year matters continued much in the same state among us. During the seven years that I had been there, we had been favoured to enjoy union and peace, though to me they had been seven years of long and weary captivity. In Potton itself there were not many, *indeed*, who were savingly

converted to God whilst I was there ; yet around that spot I have counted a goodly number to whom the Lord made me useful in the first work of grace upon their souls. But the real state of the case "the day will declare," and to *that day* I make my appeal.

After my great deliverance in London, recently related, I did not again sink into my former bondage. A few were added to the church at Potton from time to time. On one occasion I had been unable to find any text for the Sabbath morning, but just as I entered the gates, this passage came with force to my mind—"Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." Acts xiii. 41. I was reluctant to take this text for my discourse, for fear of falling into a severe or reproving spirit ; but I was compelled to take it. Under these words two persons received strong convictions, of whose case I had afterwards every reason to entertain good hopes.

But soon indications appeared of my labours at Potton being about to be brought to a conclusion ; as the promise of an open door had begun to be fulfilled in other places, so now the door at Potton seemed to be gradually closing. After seven years of peace, the old adversary began to show his cloven foot in the church, and to excite a spirit of discord and opposition on the part of one or two persons. But as I have no desire to stir up old strife, I shall in this narrative draw somewhat of a veil over the sequel of my history there. God has a sovereign right to dispose of us as he pleases: when a removal of one of his ministers is to take place, an occasion will not be wanting.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend.*

Potton.

. . . If I had not had many trials and troubles, I should not have known half as much as I do of the sweet friendship of my ever-loving and ever-lovely Jesus. Never servant had a kinder Master. Oh how sweetly does he sometimes comfort my soul, so that I long to lay me down and die! I bless my God for trials; nothing else would drive me to the bosom of Jesus. No earthly paradise is half so sweet as it is to dwell in the arms of Christ.

We have now and then a soul added to us; some of them have delivered such a testimony for Christ, as has rejoiced my heart. The more our floor has been purged, the more Jesus has afforded his presence. I find no comfort or peace, but what I receive from my dear Lord. At G—— I am more at home than here, because I enjoy more of my dear Master's presence. Bless his precious name. He sometimes turns in and says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

Potton, 1833.

MY DEAR EDWARD,

I am sorry to hear of the indisposition of ———. Please present my love and gratitude to them all at Lakenheath. I have not forgotten their prayers for me, when languishing on a sick-bed, for I believe the Lord heard and answered them; and remember me especially to the writer of the letters, for you know that in my own mind I claim a kindred to him, and call him Brother S——. His letters have so entered into my conscience that I have been persuaded of having passed from death unto life, because I felt such a love for the Lord's dear family; and this has given me a lift by the way, for ~~to~~ a poor cripple, through

a rough and stormy road, such helps are comforts. I feel at present somewhat dark and deserted, and yet this passage has laid with some sweetness on my mind—"Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." I feel anxious to lay hold of this precious promise, and believe that it is *for me*; but doubts cloud my path, and yet I know, and have often proved, that God is faithful to his word; but our river seems dry at Potton, and we lack that spiritual sustenance which it is the work of God's ministers instrumentally to impart. . . .

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his Wife.*

Wolverhampton, 1834.

MY DEAR MARIA,

I need not tell you I was glad to hear from you, yet there was something that gave me much uneasiness,—it was that *one of you* was poorly. Now, I wish you to bear in mind, when you write, that I want to be informed exactly how you all are. I believe I suffer more when I am in uncertainty as to who is unwell, or what is the matter, than if I knew the reality, neither do I know *how* to mention it at the throne of grace, and this is what I endeavour to do several times a day. . . . Everything here is as dark to sight ~~and~~ sense as possible. The first morning I came I was quite astonished to see how very few people were present, and how dull and flat everything appeared. It is a little better now,—one or two souls have been liberated under the Word. But in other respects things bear a worse aspect than they did. Mr. M—— has bought a chapel at B——. It is to be opened to-morrow week. So that, few as they are here, they are expected (humanly speaking) to get fewer. Mr. —— has observed perfect silence since I came. I conclude from appearances, that I am to go when the seven weeks are expired. Oh, I cannot set down upon paper what I have felt for myself, for you, and for my dear children! This morning I had a little more of peace ~~than~~ I have had since I came here,

but I have had no gracious answers to prayer, no promise applied. I administered the Lord's Supper last Sunday night, and I had a very good time, as I also had, in speaking from "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which is lost." Wednesday evening, also on Thursday evening, at Dudley, I had a good time, and there were many to hear, and some were refreshed. Indeed, I have no more fear of prospering in this place—if I might have a fair opportunity—than I have of dipping this pen into the ink ; but I am most sorely afraid they will not let me try. I have been much cast down to-day, and had I given way to sense and reason, I should have said, "All these things are against me." Yesterday these words were a little sweetened to me—"Be still, and know that I am God." May the Lord enable me to stand still, and see the salvation of God. Who can tell what the Lord may do? I am satisfied that we could live here on less than at Potton. I try to pray for you all several times a day, and now send you—all I have—a husband's and a father's love. God bless you all! So prays

Your affectionate husband,
EDWARD BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend.*

Potton, April 1834.

I HAD a few precious hours yesterday. My wife and I had the best season that we have had for months. I should have had no objection had you been there ; it was not like that time which the two disciples had at Emmaus, it was solid and sweet, rather than rapturous. I think I may say the world was riven out of our hearts ; I seemed like a man standing upon a rock, and viewing the world at a distance,—the bubble was burst, the spell broken, the cheat was discovered, and I felt as if I could like to have said, "Adieu, thou world so vain." I was ready to call myself a thousand times a fool, for ever being enamoured with it. To the believer, the world is only a painted courtesan ; still my bad heart delights in this Delilah. "Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech." The toy-makers

would find rattle-making a poor trade, if children were not pleased with them ! Now, the world is the devil's rattle ; not to please him, but to please *us fools* withal, he jingles this plaything in our ears, and we are pleased with the sight and sound, and our foolish hearts dance to the tune. Then out comes our loving Father, with his rod, to drive a little of this foolishness out of us.—“ *Fools*, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.” Never did I see into that Scripture, as I saw into it yesterday. I believe that had I been in the pulpit, our people would have had a little bit of a lecture, whether they had profited by it or not. I am sorely afraid that as it respects some of our great people, they worship God just the same as if he were a wooden god, whilst they serve mammon in spirit and in truth. O what I have suffered upon *this* score since I have been at Potton ! I do not say it to reproach anybody. I know I should be as bad as Saul, Haman, Judas, Demas, or indeed any other muck-worm. But for the grace of God, my neighbours might point at me and say, “There goes Nebuchadnezzar the great !” O bless the Lord, my soul, for taking such pains to correct me. I assure you, I could not do without the rod of correction. God's method of discipline with me is this—plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning. Without these, he would neither have prayer or praise from me, not a breath of either. But why should I spend so much time in telling you how bad I am, unless it be to show a little of the Lord's power, grace, and goodness ? Whatever he has been to others, he has been a *good* God to me !—

“O that my soul could love and praise Him more,
His beauties trace, his Majesty adore,
Live near his heart, upon his bosom lean,
Obey his voice, and all his will esteem.”

May you and I enjoy the incomparable sweetness of walking with God. His is the best friendship. O how sweet it is to hold Jesus in the galleries of his grace ; but how much sweeter will it be, to be clasped in his arms for ever. My soul longs to be in Abraham's bosom.—

"Then in a sweeter, nobler song,
I'll sing his power to save."

May we reach that delightful land, and raise a still loftier strain than Gabriel sings. May the dear Lord be a Father to the fatherless, and a Husband to the widow.

Yours affectionately, in Gospel bonds,

E. BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, to a *Friend*.

Potton, May, 1834.

My wife and I have this morning presented ourselves at the throne of grace, to thank our heavenly Father for the very handsome present you sent. My wife shed tears at the contents of your letter,—they were tears of gratitude. May God bless you all, and restore into your bosoms ten-fold. It came in a time of need; we were about setting up a new bed, which was required for the increase of family; and although we wanted neither food nor raiment, our little twins wanted a bed. I believe we had both been to a throne of grace; I had been very unbelieving and depressed in spirit, for I have been heavily tried in mind, in providence, with the church and congregation; so that I have been greatly afflicted, and for many days have been, like Hannah of old, of a sorrowful spirit.

Years ago I thought myself a man ~~endued~~ with strong confidence; but now I am weaker than helpless infancy, and what is worse, a fool, and slow of heart to believe. Yet this morning I can sing of mercy and judgment. Oh! when shall I be more steadfast in believing—more loyal to my great Master? I feel that the publican's prayer belongs to me, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Still, my anchor is within the veil; I know in whom I have believed, I know that I am part of his body mystical,—somewhere about the *feet*, I believe, for I am ever and anon flooding in tribulation, mud, and mire. O what a mercy it is that the dear Redeemer will not, and cannot do without me, "for the head cannot say unto the feet, I have no need of you."

O wonder of wonders, that ever such a sinner as I am should be permitted to stand in his eternal favour !

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his Wife.*

Lakenheath, July 1834.

. . . I HAVE been spending the forenoon with Mr. and Mrs. —, and have had a very comfortable morning. How sweet is the communion of saints, when the love of God in Christ is shed abroad in the heart ! I have a great desire, and some hope, that God will bless this visit.

Mrs. —, a very aged woman, was sweetly set free on Lord's-day, under the word, and could not sleep the night after for praising and blessing God. The second time I was here, a wicked young man was first awakened (as I learn) under my preaching. I have been struck this morning by the account which Mrs. — has given me of it, and wish you had been present to hear it. It was very striking, the change was so sudden and so great. Bless the Lord, O my soul, for ever condescending to make use of an instrument so weak and vile as I am. O for grace to love Him more and serve him better. I am not quite in that frame of spirit which I would desire : I want light, life, peace, liberty, and savour ; yet, thanks be to God, I do possess a very little of these things, and I desire, with the woman of Canaan, to partake of the crumbs which fall from the Master's table.

“ A crumb of mercy, Lord, I crave,
Unworthy to be fed
With dainties, such as angels have,
Or with the children's bread.”

Yet the Lord thinketh upon me, blessed, for ever blessed, be his name. I shall not die, but live and praise the name of the Lord. . . .

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

CHAPTER XVIII.

[1834.]

TRIALS AT POTTON—INVITATION TO WOLVERHAMPTON FOR SEVEN WEEKS—AT LAKENHEATH—BLESSING ON LABOURS—RELATES TWO CASES—LETTERS.

THE troubles to which I have alluded were not un-blessed ; they drove me to a throne of grace, made me cry louder to Him who knoweth all things, and who alone could deliver,—and my cry came in before his holy temple. I was going to Muggerhanger one evening to preach, and, oppressed with the weight of my burdens, I cried to the Lord ; I found I was helped in doing so, and on passing through the plantation near Sandy, the Lord broke in upon my soul, and favoured me with nearness to, and power with Him, and there comforted my soul as one whom his mother comforteth. In that walk, I believe, the Lord applied to my heart from *twenty* to *thirty* Scriptures. He knoweth that I lie not.

At last an unpleasant affair respecting the rejection of an approved candidate for admission into the church, caused an open breach between the pastor and some of the principal friends. This matter I leave in the hands of Him to whom I have long since committed it,—who is a God of knowledge, and by whom actions are weighed. From this moment I felt that my quitting Potton was an event certain, and not far off. At this juncture, (August 1834,) I

received an invitation from Wolverhampton for seven Sabbaths, which, with the permission of my congregation at Potton, I accepted.

As my road lay through Gamlingay, I reached a rising ground, and there paused to turn back and survey the place of my nine years' sojourn: my tears fell as I thought of the young ones, whom I looked upon as my spiritual children, and I felt a heart-pang that I can never describe. It was a moment of mingled tenderness and sorrow, and the remembrance of all I had suffered in that place came vividly before me. As I stood there, thus meditating, these words fell upon my spirit with great power,—“And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah nissi: for he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.” Exod. xvii. 15, 16.

But it is time to turn back in my narrative to the little church at Lakenheath, among whom I had now for a period of three years been called to preach twice in the year. One or two cases of a Divine work in my hearers there, may serve to show that my occasional labours in that church had not been unblest, and may perhaps prove interesting to my readers.

The first was the case of a young person of about eighteen years of age. She was attacked with severe illness, and soon reduced very low: her disorder appeared to be consumption; but the troubles of her mind were even more acute than her bodily affliction. She was suffering under a severe work of the Law upon her soul, deep and cutting convictions of sin, was under sentence of death in her conscience, and in great terror of the wrath of God. She seemed to be destitute of one discernible ray of hope, and brought so near despair as to be tempted to tear the hair off her head. In this state her mother sent over for me from Potton, a distance of fifty miles. I went to visit

the poor invalid, but could elicit nothing as to the state of her soul. During several visits, I could not get from her so much as yes or no, in answer to my repeated questions: she was like one dumb. Looking up to the Lord for direction in this perplexity, I read to her the Gospel of John, beginning at the eleventh chapter, and commenting upon it as we proceeded, after which her mother and I engaged in prayer by the side of the sick girl. Many of these solemn interviews we had with her, in which I believe not one word did she utter of her state of mind. But in secret, her case was laid with a great weight and burden upon me, and was frequently spread by me before the throne of grace. In commenting on the fourteenth chapter, I dwelt on the verse, "Let not your heart be troubled," &c. and many others of that chapter: the presence of the Lord was very sensibly with me; and such was the power which accompanied the word, that she was several times enabled to *smile* in spite of the resistance of sin, Satan, and herself; still there was no further response. We prayed again; I had great enlargement, and was conscious that she was raised to hope; so felt her mother. We both agreed that she had passed the line from death unto life.

The succeeding visit was very similar. But we had not left her room many minutes before she sent for her mother and myself, to tell us of the joyful change in her soul, and bid us join with her in praising God. Whilst I had been speaking, her doubts and fears had been shaken, and had given way, and something like joy and peace in believing had sprung up, but she would not mention it to us. No sooner had we left the room, than a strong temptation of Satan seized her, that this joy and peace was all mere natural feeling, excited only by what the minister had said. Down she sunk again in a moment, when the Lord imme-

holy oil, that she may be quite ready when the heavenly Bridegroom cometh.

Another case which I may mention, was that of a poor labourer who was employed during the winter months in threshing wheat. For nearly twenty years he had been in a state of bondage and fears. One night that I was preaching at Mildenhall, near Lakenheath, he, with some others, had followed me thither. My text was: "Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." Isa. xlv. 22. Such light and power accompanied these words and the preaching, that the poor thresher's burden seemed at once removed, and his soul filled with divine consolation. He had five miles to walk home, but the distance appeared short, so full was his soul of holy joy, and so eager was he to tell his wife the joyful tidings. He thought he could remember the whole of the discourse: however, before he reached his own door, both the sermon and the consolation had vanished from his mind.

Greatly distressed by this trial, he went to bed, but rose early, and endeavoured to call upon God. He then went as usual to his work, and while in the barn, bemoaning his benighted condition, the words of the text came to him: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." After this, the discourse I had preached was brought to his mind by the Holy Remembrancer, and God himself preached it so powerfully to his soul, that he was fully liberated; all his doubts, fears, and guilt were at once removed, and the love of Christ flowed into his heart as a copious stream. He rejoiced and praised the Lord, and threshed with a joyful heart.

My friend remained on that mount of communion with God for nearly two years, *always rising at four*

Ock in the morning to bless and praise the Lord. His breakfast was but poor for such labour, it was a piece of bread crumbled into a basin of boiling water, and sprinkled with salt and pepper, yet for this humble fare he would praise God in thankful adoration, and often shed tears of gratitude for the Lord's mercies towards him. It is written, "The week shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." May the Lord provide for him, keep and preserve him to his heavenly kingdom.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend.*

Potton, December 1834.

YOUR letter came to hand this morning. I desire to thank you for every act of kindness, and for the Christian sympathy and love which you evidence to me in my present trying circumstances.

I am not in want, blessed be God, yet I am surrounded with trials and difficulties: "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts, all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. O what a favour it is to have a covenant God to go to in seas and storms of deep distress; when the fierce wind Euroclydon blows a tempest, when the ship is caught, and we cannot bear up into the wind, and we let her drive. I suppose certain men, skilled in nautical affairs, have been so bold as to say that St. Paul was a bad sailor; however, he was exactly such a sailor as I am. Please to read the twenty-seventh chapter of the Acts, from the fourteenth to twentieth verses inclusive: I have just been in a place very like that, but I am now in the forty-first verse. Yesterday the Lord obtained for me a quarter of a year's grace (if the Lord opens no other door).

I am doing as a particular friend of mine exhorted me to do, with the help of God; his exhortation was, "Watch and pray, *pray* and *watch*:" so, I desire to bless God for it,

I am upon my watch-tower. I have got *two* eyes,—the eye of sense and the eye of faith: with the former, things appear very forbidding, very gloomy; with the latter, it is not quite so.

Whilst I stay at Potton, I am to have no set salary; I am to take what comes in, so that now I and my little brood have to live like the fowls of heaven, upon what we can pick up. I am thrown nakedly upon the providence of God, and must fetch all my resources from the bank of Faith. O what blessed words are these, “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” I could neither tell you my inward sinkings, or my soarings, my troubles or my comforts, my conflicts or the sweet peace I am favoured to enjoy.

I trust there is nothing the matter between me and my heavenly Father,—no mixture of wrath in my cup. In the midst of many trials, O how sweet is it to *taste communion* with the King of saints, and prove the benefits of a mercy-seat. May the Lord humble me under his mighty hand, and enable me to cast my cares upon Him. Almost everywhere, Zion has her troubles, yet they will be *greater* and much *heavier* ere she obtains deliverance. Sweet deliverance is usually preceded by bitter pangs. As for your Zion, I wish you grace, mercy, and peace.

I will remind you what you want,—the outpouring of the sweet influences of the blessed spirit; your unpleasant things must be settled at a *throne* of grace. *Pray! pray!* Prayer will find a remedy for *all evils*,—ardent prayer will fetch down Gilead’s balm; the precious blood and the holy unction will heal your wounds, if anything will. Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith. The wolf has got into many of Zion’s folds. O that the great Shepherd of Israel would come amongst his flock, come in the light and in the sweet power of his spirit, to heal the diseases of the flock, to carry and suckle the lambs, and to set the fold. Come, my Redeemer, come! and make thy Sharon a fold for flocks, and a place for the herds to lie down in. . . .

E. BLACKSTOCK.

CHAPTER XIX.

[1834—35.]

JOURNEY TO WOLVERHAMPTON — LETTERS — DIFFICULTIES TO BE REMOVED—PLEADS WITH GOD, AND PREVAILS—LETTERS.

I RESUME my journey to Wolverhampton, while I request the indulgence of the reader in mentioning the details of it. The circumstance I allude to, clearly showed the hand of God in leading me thither.

At Birmingham I passed the night, having taken my place in the coach, and paid my fare to Wolverhampton; but the coach came up quite full, and drove by, as did three others, although I hailed each as it passed. I had therefore no choice but to walk the rest of my journey, a distance of thirteen miles. It was already past six in the evening of a hot day in August, and I was much fatigued with walking about the streets of Birmingham, and had a carpet-bag to carry; moreover, it was Saturday evening, and I was to preach at Wolverhampton the following morning; and it now seemed very probable I should not get there at all. Not a little harassed and dispirited I left Birmingham on foot. Before I had proceeded many steps, these words came to me—"I will direct their way in truth." Thus encouraged, I pushed on and reached Handsworth, where I set down my load and halted to rest. Again the same words came—"I will direct their work in truth." At the same moment

a coach came up ; it was going to Wednesbury, and had one seat outside for me ; when I reached that place I had still five miles before me. It was now dusk, and I was oppressed with fatigue, the day having been very sultry. Once more the words came—"I will direct their work in truth." While I was wondering how this was to be accomplished, a spring-cart came up, and the driver obligingly took me as far as Bilston. This was within three miles of my destination, but I felt so exhausted that I was ready to abandon any further effort : but the words came a fourth time—"I will direct their work in truth." Soon after this, a labouring man passed me on horseback, and kindly consented to carry my luggage, while I, with great difficulty, walked by his side. In this way I at last reached Wolverhampton at about ten o'clock at night, having lost my fare, but gained more than sufficient to compensate for the loss of my money, by a rich lesson of spiritual experience and instruction. The words of the text pointed as straight as an arrow to Wolverhampton.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his Wife.*

Wolverhampton, August 1834.

. . . I FEEL a little more of the spirit of prayer, but have had very little opportunity for it yet. O what a sweet thing retirement is, when the soul, by grace, is disposed to seek communion with the sinner's best and only Friend. There is no company on earth to be compared with his. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth whom I desire besides thee." I have always found a *throne* of grace the best remedy for the diseases of the mind, and for obtaining a *cure* for the heart-ache.

"O for a closer walk with God," &c.

May the Lord bless us with the spirit of prayer, and with close communion with Jesus. O blessed Redeemer, grant

us much of thy delightful presence, that we may live upon our Saviour's smiles and lean upon his arm.

As for the time of our separation, it will soon pass over. Every moment is like a bird struggling to get loose. Time stayeth not, O that we may live for eternity, and to all eternity ! May we mutually pray for each other, and at last be found in Him, without spot or wrinkle.

Your loving husband and old companion in much tribulation.

E. BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

Potton, November 6, 1834.

I HAVE just received Mr. G——y's reply to your last letter. He says : "My dear Brother, I can truly say I feel for you, but after both thought and prayer, I feel at a loss how to advise you. God in his providence has given you a large family, and I am sure it would be highly wrong to find fault with Him, but still it renders your case more difficult ; there are so few churches of real truth who are able to support a minister with a *large family*. . . . I hope the Lord will direct you. . . . And you may rest assured if I know of any opening in the Lord's providence, I shall lose no time in letting you know. I do assure you, it would give me great pleasure to see a way opened. The Lord can make darkness light ; O that his blessed Majesty would be gracious to do it in your behalf.

'If you can trust the Lord,
I am sure he'll make a way,
And kindly aid afford,
Till his appointed day.'

. . . . To trust the Lord, and rely upon him, is what nature cannot do, my dear brother. I know well that faith must be put to the test, and often be tried by fire ; but the end will be well. The Lord keep you at his feet, and much in prayer. My love to your wife."

I have given you a correct copy, my dear husband, of Mr. G——y's letter. May the Lord "*direct your work in truth*," even as he said unto you. I feel very much for you at this critical period ; I have a little hope that the

Matters were gradually so ordered, that at the expiration of my visit, I received from the church a further invitation for six months. For some time after, I never crossed that bridge without pausing to thank God for the mercy he had bestowed upon me there.

That was not the only favoured season that I met with on that road. One Sabbath morning early, after I had been staying at the house of a kind friend at Tettenhall, the Lord broke in upon my soul with a rich anointing; I felt the joy of salvation,—a divine light poured in, and my heart was enlarged; the house seemed to me a delightful spot, the palace of a king, and a heavenly place; so much so, that for once I longed for a silent Sabbath, that I might be alone with my Redeemer, for I felt he was very near me. On my walk to Wolverhampton that morning, I accompanied, for a short distance, a friend who was on her way to teach at the Sunday-school, and my feelings were like those of the two disciples at Emmaus; Christ talked with my soul, he opened to me the Scriptures: as I parted with my companion my heart seemed to feel a spiritual union to her. Before I reached the chapel, my heavenly frame had subsided and vanished,—a circumstance which seemed to augur ill for the place.

After the renewal of my invitation at Wolverhampton, I returned to Potton for about a month; endeavoured to commit the sheep and lambs into the hands of the great and good Shepherd, and took my leave of the people there, and returned to Wolverhampton, leaving my family for a short interval, as I supposed, to stay behind at Potton. But there was another great barrier to be broken down.

On my return to Wolverhampton to serve them for six months, I found it had been decreed by the principal managers, that during all that period my

wife and nine children were to be separated from me ; they were to continue in their home at Potton, just 100 miles off. But in this strait I was not left to appeal to the feelings of my hearers, I spoke to no one on the subject, and fully persuaded that the Lord had opened the gates of brass in the first instance, I thought he might, in answer to the poor man's cry, once more cut in sunder the bars of iron. I resolved at least to try.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

MY DEAR EDWARD,

Potton, January 26, 1835.

I endeavour to obey your injunction,—to wait upon God as often as I am enabled, but oh, I often feel cast down, because the Lord seems to withhold an answer ; yet there is no where else to flee to, but the footstool of sovereign Mercy : the Lord keep you and me there ; we cannot wait in vain. Sometimes I feel very desirous that the dear Lord would give me grace, both patiently to hope and quietly to wait for his appearing ; at other times I am ready to give up hope of anything in this life but “bonds and afflictions.”

The dear children and I desire to be affectionately remembered to you, and we say, “Pray for us,” for we feel our destitute situation ; and may the Lord preserve you in body and mind, and at his appointed time return you in safety. May he make you useful in that part of his vineyard where you are now labouring, and give you to see that you were not sent in vain.

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

MY VERY DEAR EDWARD,

Potton, February 1835.

I received yours, and was extremely sorry to find you were so dejected in your mind at your expected disap-

pointment: and I would now most affectionately exhort you to endeavour to "put a cheerful courage on," and try to bear with Christian fortitude the things which you cannot avert, remembering that the wisdom of God cannot err, and resting assured that he will not forsake you. Has he not said, "I will never leave thee?" and, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about them that fear him?" O, may you be favoured to take Him at his word, and, through the influence of Divine grace, feel every fretful thought sweetly stilled in your bosom; may you be favoured to return to your habitation; may the power of Omnipotent grace lay you submissive at his feet, and, in the disposition of your dear Master, enable you to say from your very heart: "Father, not my will, but thine be done!" Did Christ your Lord suffer, and shall you repine? No, my dear Edward, "endure hardness like a soldier" of the cross; and remember, too, that the bosoms of your affectionate wife and children are open to receive you: we are grown quite impatient for your return, our happiness is blended with yours, and without you we feel that life has no charms. Then make no tarrying, and, oh, these interposing days! may they soon pass away, and we be favoured to meet underneath the smiles and approbation of our God. . . .

Your most affectionate and devoted wife,
MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

Potton, February 1835.

I DULY received yours, and I need not tell you it gave me great pleasure to hear from you; although the account of your sorrows filled my heart with sorrow also, yet I found a degree of pleasure in the participation of your woes, which is altogether indescribable. And the dear Lord by that means led me into such a sweet and profitable train of reflections upon his gracious dealings with us, as it regards his providence, his grace, and your career in the

ministry, which at once dissolved me before Him. I felt the softening influences of his grace in my heart, and was constrained to pour it out in fervent cries to my God. And he, by his Spirit, sweetly comforted my soul by leading me to see that he had done all things well. I looked upon his providence over us from the pleasing associations of our youth, and I said, "*It is well!*" I viewed his grace, in calling us out of heathenish darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel, and I said, "*It is well!*"

I surveyed his kind care over you in the ministry, how he has led you into the truth, and preserved you from errors, and I said, "*It is well.*" I received you as a servant of Christ, walking in the warm footsteps of your Divine Master, and I was led to see that you are suffering with him, in order that you may reign with him. That you are tasting the bitter cup of poverty, that you may have fellowship with him there. That you are sowing in tears, that you may, like him, reap in joy. That he was made perfect through suffering, and *that* you must be also. That he has chosen you in the furnace of affliction, and determined to refine you in it, but assuring you that he stands by the furnace as a watchful alchymist, and will not suffer his gold to perish.

That he sees the unkind hand which smites you, and the ungracious tongue which scourges you, but says for your comfort, "Fear not, I will keep thee. If they have done these things in the green tree, how much more will they do them in the dry. It is enough for the servant that he be as his Lord." You know he was wounded in the house of his friends, and his younger brethren must taste his woes in some small measure, that they may know how to consider his sufferings who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, and be enabled to appreciate the great, the glorious salvation which he has accomplished for them.

He is a Brother born for adversity. O my dear Edward, what a declaration is that,—how replete with consolation! He was born to endure adversity in this world, that he might bring many sons and daughters to glory, and that

his children might be constrained to seek him as their companion in the day of trouble. Oh, how much of the suitability, the sweetness, and the truth of that text have I been made to realize in my own soul, for I have very many times felt, by experience, that it is in my season of *adversity*, that I associate most with Christ: when my earthly brethren drop their hold, then my heart is most disposed to flee to that Brother who sticketh fast, and whose love is everlasting; and I never find him turn his back upon me when I am feelingly poor and needy.

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

MY DEAR EDWARD,

Potton, March 22, 1835.

I this morning received a letter from Wolverhampton, a copy of which I transmit. The show of hands at the church meeting was unanimous for your going there for six months, on probation. . . . I have also to inform you that I have received a letter from Mr. L—— of W——n, in which he wishes you to supply there for two Sabbaths, and if you could comply, to write and say how you are situated, for they feel very anxious about you. Mr. L—— says, he wishes in his heart they could raise you a sufficient income; they should be very glad to have you among them. It was a kind letter, and required an early answer, so I took the liberty to answer it immediately.

I am thankful to say that hitherto the dear Lord has maintained his empire in my soul. I am sure I can sincerely say that I have been much more happy since you gave up at Potton. I felt this, even before there was a prospect of your going to Wolverhampton, and when all was gloomy and dark. If you are spared to go, may the Lord be pleased graciously to carry you up in the power of his *own might*, and then you are sure to win. May we each be blessedly kept near the throne of grace, where we have so often had mercies dispensed to us, both for soul and body.

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his Wife.*

Wolverhampton, April 1835.

. . . . In the afternoon, and in the evening of yesterday, the Lord granted me his gracious power and his blessed presence. Bless the Lord, O my soul! Let everything that has breath praise his holy name for ever and ever. O thou God of grace, help thy unworthiest servant to adore thee for ever, looking upon such an one. Glory, and honour, and power, and dominion, and majesty to Jehovah Adonai, for his covenant mercies to my soul!

In my former journeyings I have often had you and my dear children laid upon my heart, yet I think I never felt it so much as now; I have been bowed down with it. I am watching and praying for a favourable word for your removal here, and I hope to wait for it, as the sentinel waits for breaking day. I wonder much that it should thus hang in doubt, but perhaps our dear Lord only hides the purposes of his grace to make it better known.

You would be surprised to know how devils and men are working against me in this place. I am in the fire and between the straits; but I bless the Lord he has not given me over into the hands of the enemy. In all my travels I never had less of *flesh* to trust to. O that I may become strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. If the Lord will but grant me his sweet *presence*, and his blessed power, I am quite content to be here.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

Having (as already stated) resolved to carry my anxious desires for the removal of my family from Potton, to the throne of grace, I appealed to none of the people, but continued earnestly to beseech the Lord so to touch their hearts as to bring about the desired event. My gracious Master was still within call; my engagement was very soon and unexpectedly extended from six to twelve months, and 16^l. was

subscribed by some of the friends towards the expense of conveying my family and goods to Wolverhampton.

Could any simple child of God know *all* the obstacles that beset this removal, he would agree with me that this was indeed opening the two-leaved gates!

CHAPTER XX.

[1835—1837.]

MAY 1835, FAMILY BROUGHT TO WOLVERHAMPTON—LETTERS—WARNING AND FOREBODINGS OF TRIALS—VISITATION THREE SEVERAL NIGHTS—TRIALS IN CHURCH—LAKENHEATH—LETTERS.

I HASTENED back to Potton to fetch my family. We quitted that place on 13th May, 1835; took the coach for Birmingham, near the spot where blessed Bunyan was so long imprisoned, and reached Wolverhampton at eleven. A friend's hospitable house was open to receive us that night, and we were afterwards quartered with different friends, until our goods, which were coming by water, should arrive; by that time a house was found for us, No. 12, Temple-street, and we and eight of our little ones entered it.

My eldest son, Henry, was apprenticed to a draper at Potton, and remained there. Our house had been procured for us by Providence, in answer to prayer. I had a small room for private retirement—my first indulgence of the kind; it was expensive in proportion to my means, the rent being double that I had paid at Potton, and my family much larger; for two years at Wolverhampton, there were in all twelve of us to be maintained. This circumstance drove me continually to the throne of grace towards the end of each quarter, but in every instance divine Providence sent money in time. The landlord invariably found the rent ready for him when he called, and I was compelled to see and own the hand of God in pro-

viding it. He appeared for us in many other ways there. The friends at Lakenheath, whom I still visited periodically, continued the same kindness and liberality which they had displayed to us at Potton.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend.*

Wolverhampton, May 1835.

. . . . For several weeks after I left you my soul was so dark, and the dispensations of divine Providence were so gloomy and forbidding, that I was almost broken in pieces. I prayed until I could pray no longer; the enemy and my own bad heart said—Praying is of no use! so I must tell you—(though it is a shame to write it)—I for some days gave over praying for deliverance. My carnal obstinate heart said—Let things go as they like, I will care no more, if I can help it. The adversary, taking the advantage of the Lord's seeming delay, often told me that I was cursed, turn which way I would. He often suggested that had I had a small family, I might easily have obtained a place and a people, but as we were numerous, the church would have nothing to do with us. He often told me my children would come to want, and I should have to scour the country like a vagabond. These suggestions have at times even thrown me into violent perspirations, and my trials were truly heavy. However, as David encouraged himself in the Lord his God, so I sometimes thought—"Well, perhaps I may die in some ditch, or upon some dunghill, but I am sure of one thing, I shall go to heaven whenever I leave this world, for I am certain the *church triumphant* will take me in, if the church militant should continue to disown me!" I had no sweet savour upon my spirit; my moisture was turned into the drought of summer, and when I kept silence my bones waxed old. O, my brethren, how *easy it is to believe* when *Providence smiles* upon us. But when the hand of God and man seem against us, when everything seems to make against the fulfilment of the promise, believing is hard

work! However, though at times my faith fainted, yet I consider that, upon the whole, the Lord did bring me through wonderfully. In a few hours sovereign grace brightened the whole scene.

A few weeks ago—one Thursday evening—the church met. The next morning I was informed they had renewed their call for twelve months. My family was to be brought over, &c. On that day I took a house. On this day fortnight, my wife and I, and eight children, were on our way to this place. We reached about eleven at night; our furniture did not arrive until Wednesday morning, so that we lived with friends until we came into this house. Many of the Potton friends behaved with most wonderful kindness to the last. The day we travelled was a day of mercies,—the Lord kindly appeared for us many times. On the next morning I received a box containing a quantity of useful things, a sovereign, and a very kind letter, from a lady I had never seen or heard of; she had merely heard of me, and had seen one of my little books. I could not help thanking and praising God for his wonderful mercy to a poor, proud, rebellious sinner. O what a gracious God hath he been to me. Bless the Lord, O my soul!

“ O my distrustful heart,
How small thy faith appears;
But greater, Lord, thou art,
Than all my doubts and fears.
Did Jesus once upon me shine,
Then Jesus is for ever mine.”

It seems strange to be able to trust the Lord with the *soul*, yet to be unable to trust him for meaner things! but, alas! such is the deceitfulness of my wicked heart. The Lord has answered my poor prayers in a great number of things, yet I am not without some heavy ballast to steady me. In the first place, my eldest boy, Henry, is far from being well at Potton, and then I have plenty at Wolverhampton, to exercise both my faith and my patience. When I first came amongst this people they were very few, but they gradually increased, which a little en-

But I had sufficient trials to ballast me heavily, and warnings to expect more. Such a warning I had received on the occasion of accompanying my family from Potton. I had felt well and happy in soul, and, seated on the coach, with some of my little ones on my knee, and some by my side, was singing verses of hymns as they occurred to my mind, when my songs were suddenly stopped by the coming of these words: "Behold I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me." Acts xx. 22, 23.

This expectation was strengthened by forebodings of great and sore trials, which troubled me soon after our removal. The first intimation of them I received from these words: "A whisperer separateth chief friends." Prov. xvi. 28. By this I gathered that a great friend at Manchester was intended, and in a letter to him communicated my foreboding; and though there was at that time no interruption to our intimacy and friendship, yet that foreboding was eventually realized.

Other intimations of trial and suffering were sent to me in this passage: "Behold their valiant ones (messengers, *margin*,) shall cry without; the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly." Is. xxxiii. 7. And in this, "Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?" Joel ii. 17.

This passage not only came with power, but it hovered over my mind for weeks afterwards; and the weight of their testimony was confirmed by the circumstance, that one of my friends at a distance re-

ceived the same words in reference to me, and stated that fact to others, without having heard from, or communicated with me at all. This deepened my conviction in the certainty of their fulfilment: and can I now doubt it, after having so fully drunk into their force and meaning?

But if the Lord sent me, and thus confirmed to me many and various sorrowful anticipations, he knew also how to prepare and strengthen me for the coming struggle, and sustain me through it to the end. Such I now judge to have been the design of a remarkable visitation which happened to me at my dwelling in Temple-street. I was led one night in a particular manner to pour out my soul in prayer, and as I thus lay upon my bed, the blessed Lord most sweetly broke in upon me, and he and my soul were in high and sweet communion all the night. I wept for joy, and began to praise and bless the Lord for his mercy in thus visiting me. The joys of heaven were so opened to me, and Christ's love and communion were so powerful and sweet, that I could not forbear, in a low tone of voice, though in a rapturous manner, entreating Him to take me to himself, out of this world of sin and sorrow. I prayed earnestly for my tabernacle to be immediately dissolved, that so I might be from henceforth, and for ever, with the Lord, and out of the reach of those storms which my heart foreboded. I longed for the wings of a dove, to flee into everlasting rest. My wife awoke and overheard me, and bursting into tears, implored me, for her sake and the sake of our children, to desist. This silenced my voice, but O, how I longed to be gone! The Lord Jesus seemed by his Spirit to lie in my bosom. It was a heaven upon earth, and I had then the personal and experimental fulfilment of the words of the spouse, "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night between my breasts." In this

manner a second night was passed, and a great part of a third, during the whole of which period all inclination to sleep was taken away, and I never closed my eyes. About two in the morning of the third night, a temptation seized me that I should never rest again; the comforting vision of faith was then withdrawn, and I fell fast asleep. This was a very remarkable event to me in my life's history.

I had not long to wait for tribulations: a severe trial awaited me in my church; a spirit of contention discovered itself among them. It had indeed existed there before I went, and continued afterwards. The end of this might easily be foreseen; it was fatal to all real prosperity; I well knew that these roots of bitterness, if they lasted, would bring us all into great trouble, for

“ The Spirit, like a peaceful dove,
Flies from the realms of noise and strife;
Why should we vex and grieve his love,
Who seals our souls to heavenly life? ”

To render the true Gospel ineffectual in a church, or drive it away altogether, I know no surer means than *strife*. I laboured hard for peace, I exerted myself to soften the asperities, and avert the conflicts of the contending parties,—but in vain. To attend church meetings in that place became at last to me a dreadful ordeal. I have often spent hours in prayer in my closet, before I could venture to these meetings, and have often returned mourning home. Alas, for the misery of discussions, contentions, and backbitings! After these unhallowed scenes, I have repeatedly paced my room, with both hands pressed to my temples, in terror of losing my reason. Not that I was harassed by the fear of man; I feared no one there,—but I did fear unhallowed contention.

The apostle James might well say, “ My brethren, be not many masters.” The Church of God has one

Master in heaven, *that* ought to suffice us without creating so many minor popes on earth! How little does that domineering mind which aspires to supremacy in the Church of Christ, understand either of the doctrines or the spirit of Him who was meek and lowly in heart!

A lesson which I received on this subject, I hope never to forget. It was in returning from one of my usual visits to Lakenheath, that these words were sent to me with extraordinary power: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." Heb. xii. 14, 15.

These words led me into a train of solemn reflection. My eyes began to be opened to discern that which is so baneful in the Church of God in the present day—"a *root of bitterness*." Its odious nature, the deadly injury that it inflicts, wherever it prevails, on the cause of Christ; its contagiouness and its virulence, like a canker or a gangrene; all this was displayed to me in a new and strong light. Since then, as often as I have discovered any traces of this root among a people, I have been in terror. For some years, indeed, it had been my anxious concern, in the churches where my lot had been cast, to secure unity, fellowship, love, and peace among the brotherhood. But latterly these words had followed me—"An evil time! an evil time!" I saw that the present was "an *evil time*," in which it was vain for me to contend any longer with this spirit, except only in private at the throne of grace. My business was in future to *follow peace* and *holiness*, and leave the turbulent spirits of the day to the Lord's dealings. Many lessons from this text did the Lord vouchsafe to give me; and as long as I sojourn in this Mesech, I hope to profit by the weight of them, more espe-

cially by that received on my journey. And wishing to act now in the full spirit of those words, I pass over the arbitration meetings, and the various trying scenes and sharp wounds I received during my three years at Wolverhampton, and drawing a veil over that distressing period, hasten to a close. Having at last convincing evidence that I had little comfort to expect there, except what the Lord might be pleased to administer from his own immediate hand, and having seen little prospect of liberty of spirit in that place, I besought the Lord to remove me, if it were his will; and I had the conviction that he would remove me.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his Wife.*

Lakenheath, March 8th, 1836.

. . . . THERE was a good attendance on the Lord's-day, and I could say Jehovah Shammi—the Lord is there. I had three good times that day. If I have my health and strength, I have sixteen times to preach between this and the 22d, and many miles to travel. I hope the Lord will give me strength, and liberty, and power in my soul. O that I may not have to say, I have run in vain, or laboured in vain. I found this an asylum to my soul. Would that Christians did but know what comfort they afford to poor ministers by their kindness—what discomfort by their neglect! What a great way a little kindness goes in an evil, unfriendly world! I often think of you all, and I pray for you, and for the people of my charge.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

MY DEAR EDWARD,

Wolverhampton, March 11, 1836.

I was glad to find that you had reached Lakenheath in health and safety, yet pained to hear that you had been

straitened for money. I do not reflect upon myself; because, remember, I wished you to take more. Well, we learn by such means what it is to be houseless and poor! the latter we have entered into, having had together a path of much tribulation; but, bless the Lord, as often as we have been in difficulties, so often have we seen his outstretched arm. To his praise be it said, he has not left us to perish, either temporally or spiritually, and this is more than we deserve. I feel very grateful to the kind friends at Lakenheath for their hospitable reception of you, and I pray God that he may reward them according to his word for all the kindness they have shown to us, and truly it has been great, and often repeated. May the Lord make you a useful servant among them, and favour you to see that this visit has been under his divine appointment, for the conveyance of covenant mercies to their souls; and while you hold sweet intercourse together, may Jesus be in your midst.

Since you left I have often felt low in my soul—cast down, but not destroyed. When I examine myself I know that my soul is cast upon “the hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof.” But I cannot tell you how the enemy is sometimes permitted to harass me with a thousand fears, until I feel almost out of breath, and I am compelled to cry vehemently for the Spirit of the Lord to lift up a standard against him, to send the peace of God into my soul, that I may be enabled to withstand my adversary. And, adored be his name! he sometimes answers my cry in so instantaneous a manner, as fills my soul with wonder and praise. My troubles seem hushed into peace; and it is with my soul as it was when Christ said to the boisterous waves—“Peace, be still.”

My Christian love to all my much esteemed friends at Lakenheath; may the Lord abundantly bless them in this life, and finally crown them with everlasting glory. I often think of them with affection, and hope to dwell with them in heaven, where perfect pleasure is; we shall then have done with the evil suggestions of the enemy—he cannot get there, to try and sever us from

our God ; and although he tries it here he fails of his purpose.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

Wolverhampton, October 1836.

. . . . THE measles, I trust, are leaving us ; the twins are now sitting up sewing dolls' things, therefore make yourself easy. Since that night when I received those words with so much light, power, and sweetness—"Which of you, by thought, can add one cubit to his stature,"—I have felt as *resigned* and comfortable as I had previously felt the reverse. On Sabbath morning I was much supported: even when the child was so ill, these words broke into my soul—

"How light, while supported by grace,
Are all the afflictions I see,
With those the dear Lord of my peace—
My Jesus, has suffered for me."

The words brought tears into my eyes, and I was dissolved before the Lord the whole of that day, and led to ponder upon the passage already cited—"Which of you, by taking thought," &c.

I was deprived of the ordinances of God's house, but those words were a sermon to my soul. I remembered that they were spoken by Him who spoke as never man spake, and they were attended with power. I was filled with contrition and self-abasement, yea, even confounded before God for my rebellion and murmurings. O, how I was favoured for a few hours to see and feel the necessity of submission to the will of God in all things, and the great peace which flows from that heavenly grace, when the Lord brings it into exercise.

O may my heavenly Father cause the savour of that sweet visit to rest upon my spirit for many days to come, for I always find that seasons of *humbling* are seasons of fruit-bearing ; and, alas ! I have hitherto been but a barren tree.

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his Wife.*

MY DEAR MARIA,

Lakenheath, October 1836.

I wish to be very thankful that the dear Lord has again appeared for you, not that I doubted his goodness towards you, but because I well know that darkness, desertion, and gloom are so ill to bear. Well, blessed be his dear name, you see he has once more sweetly fulfilled that precious word—"I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." Experience of this kind I have always found to be like the good wine, that loses its fresh flavour when it is too much opened and exposed. I hope that none will be permitted to rob you, or spoil you of your precious consolations. Communion with Jesus is really *all* that is worth living for.

"Were I possessor of the earth,
And call'd the stars my own;
Without thy graces and thyself,
I were a wretch undone."

May our heavenly Bridegroom take us into his presence-chamber, and there shed his love abroad in our hearts. O, lovely Jesus! catch up thy two poor, fickle, feeble, wayward, wandering children into thine heavenly arms, until we both say—"His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." O for communion—sacred, secret, close, and high—with Jesus! My soul longs to be alone *one* hour with Jesus. If thou meet my Beloved, tell him I am sick with love. I am not jealous of my most lovely Lord. No! may you be enabled to say—"I held him fast, and would not let him go." If Christ afford you his sweet company, you will want *no* intruders; you will adjure the daughters of Jerusalem that they stir not up; and may the Lord of all lords give you his sweet company.

I am yours, in twofold bonds,

E. BLACKSTOCK.

P.S.—I bless my dear Lord that I am no stranger to him, or to communication with him. What a mercy that

is to me! Please to give my kind love to all who will receive it. I look forward with pleasure to the time of my return to my dear family and Christian friends. Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

MY DEAR HUSBAND,

Wolverhampton, March 1837.

This is Saturday; the children are all at home, and I am very busy, but I write a line, knowing that it is painful to your anxious frame of mind to bear a day or two of suspense, and that you will come home in better spirits when you have a better account of us all. I endeavour to pray for you, and to beseech the Lord to grant you spiritual prosperity above all things. Be of good courage; the Lord has made you an able minister of his Gospel, and he will not forsake you. . . .

My kind, kindest Christian love to all the brethren. Tell Mrs. — that I desire an interest in her prayers, for I esteem her as one of my *potent praying friends*, and I do comfort myself with the thought that I have many at Lakenheath, whose prayers the Lord has designed to answer in my behalf.

Your most affectionate wife,

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend.*

Wolverhampton, 1837.

. . . . YESTERDAY I was taken with a pain in my left side, which I believe was brought on by trouble and anxiety of mind, so that you will excuse the comparative shortness of my letter. Henry has had a long and dangerous illness, and though much better, it is a question with me whether he will ever be anything like sound. My dear wife and the rest of my family are tolerably well.

Last Monday we had a few pounds due to us as salary; my wife went to ask for it, but was refused, and we have not received a farthing since. The treasurer told us he had given up the treasurership. I believe he does not know but that we are starving; yet the Lord has kept us from want hitherto, and I hope he will: but here is a condition for a family of twelve persons! I have found it a solemn trial, yet not altogether without its sweetness. I had a good morning on Wednesday; I felt persuaded that there was nothing standing between God and my soul. I felt powerfully that God was at peace with me, and that he would never leave me nor forsake me. I was led to condemn myself, and justify Him, all the way through, and my heart was a little melted under a sense of his goodness and mercy to me—the chief of sinners. Let men deal with me as they may, I believe I shall go to glory when I die. I consider that by some I am viewed as a dubious character. I am like a man in a cloud, but my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high. I am waiting at a throne of grace for the fulfilment of that promise—“And He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day.” I feel persuaded that God will make it all right for my soul by and by:—

“I shall behold his blessed face,
And stand complete in righteousness.”

Blessed be God, I am nearly weaned from the world and the church. Men are less things with me than they used to be. I wish to feel a holy indifference to human smiles, and human frowns:

“Why should I make a man my trust?
Princes must die, and turn to dust.”

Yet, it is the desire of my heart to live in *good-will to all* men—to fear God, to love the brotherhood, and honour the king. Give me the arms of Christ for my bed, and the bosom of Christ for my pillow, and I have *enough!* “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Blessed be God, I can say it now, whilst I am writing; should any

say, "It is delusion," my answer is—"Tis sweet delusion ; for I can almost say, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall there be fruit in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flocks shall be cut off from the folds, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." I believe it is the will of God that Job shall be tried to the end, but I trust that the day of my death shall be better than the day of my birth :—

"Sorrow for joy I shall exchange,
For ever freed from pain,
And o'er the plains of Canaan range,
For me to die is gain."

Through the mercy of God, though I am a tried, persecuted man, I am rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. But, remember that we are not in want of anything, nor am I seriously apprehensive that we shall be. My God shall supply all my need out of his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. God is with me in my own soul, and I hope in my ministry. I fear that many are too fond of their own popularity to judge righteous judgment in a tried brother's case—the weakest often goes to the wall. I know this is not the case with all, but, truly, *I* have had dear-bought experience on this subject. Divisions among God's children are a real grief of heart to me. As for my good name, I have endeavoured to commit that into the hands of Him who searches my heart. Besides, I am compelled to walk by that rule—Jeremiah xv. 19. As the servant of Christ I must not play at child's play. Whilst I declare that I have no evil wishes against any one in —, yet I mean to have my quarrel at the foot of the throne. Peace be with you, and with all that love the Lord Jesus.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend.*

Wolverhampton, September 1837.

I AM very much obliged to you for your last kind, spirit-stirring letter. When it came I was well up in my spirits, so that I could not forbear smiling to see how you rallied. I thought I had hardly any need of it, but I was very much mistaken, for last night I had a piece of news that fresh harrowed up my feelings, and produced a miserable sleepless night. What a poor creature I am to be so much afraid of the gathering of men against me. Now, it is very odd, I am not afraid of meeting all the enemies I have in human shape, *face to face*: I fear them no more than I do a windle-straw; but it is the plotting, hatching, undermining, privily shooting, that appals me. "Who can stand before envy?" Besides, several leading men in the ministry seem to say, "A confederacy" with them, and to fight against one's own brethren, is but a poor kind of warfare. I feel satisfied that I must now have another turn at the book of Job, and go more deeply into it than ever. Well, if the Lord shall send me Job's trials, may he send me Job's patience. The last Sabbath-day but one was a good day with my soul, for though I was, as usual, in trials, I had the sweet peace of God for my conscience-keeper, and most solemnly believed and *felt* that all was right. The savour did not seem quite gone for five days after, and that, you know, is a long time for a leaky vessel to retain so rich a peace. However, I have returned to my own sad place since then, and now it is neither hope nor despondency, clear light nor yet darkness,—though it is not three hours since I felt well. Lord, what a riddle is my soul! &c. Yet I think it a great mercy that I am not left to doubt my interest in the great Redeemer, for the devil would tempt me sometimes to believe there is no religion, and that "all men are liars." But the Lord does not suffer the enemy to take fast hold of me, but enables me to call to mind former days—some of those sweet and blessed times that I have had with

Jesus, and I cannot believe that the Lord has shown me those things to destroy me. Sometimes I see myself brought into a place where I have nothing left but Christ, and I feel as if I could *do then!* The Lord Christ is my one jewel now,—O that he would allow me to drink my fill at the fountain-head. Well, I believe I shall, by and by—

“A few more rolling suns at most
Will land me on fair Canaan’s coast;
There I shall sing my song of grace,
And see my glorious hiding-place.”

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his Wife.*

November 1837.

. . . . I HAVE heard, what has exceedingly grieved me that — died in the most wretched state of mind. I am sure it will be melancholy tidings to you, as well as to me. The Lord give us grace to watch and pray, that, as righteous persons, we may have hope in our death. If the account be true, such a death is the worst thing that can happen to a man. The worst sufferings of this present state are nothing to an eternity of God’s wrath, for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

In the midst of all our great and heavy trials, what a mercy it is to be favoured with the hope of salvation. O that the Lord may bless us more and more with his presence, that we may live and die in the arms of Immanuel.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

Wolverhampton, December 1837.

. . . . I WAS truly afflicted to find you had been so ill; we all feel very much for you. I hope you will come inside the coach; the extra expense is nothing compared to your health. I have, in my poor way, endeavoured to cry to the Lord for you in your various troubles, and I have some

little hope that he will bring you well out of them. Be of good courage ; although a dense cloud is hanging over us, and threatening temporal difficulties, yet perhaps it may break in mercy, and we shall then have renewed cause to glorify the name of the Most High. He has brought us out of many troubles, and he will not forsake us at the last. No ! he will provide, though we cannot see the way.

Your most affectionate wife,
MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

CHAPTER XXI.

[1838.]

THIRD YEAR AT WOLVERHAMPTON EXPIRES—IS INVITED BY THE BAPTIST CHURCH AT LAKENHEATH TO THE PASTORAL CHARGE—ILLNESS IN FAMILY—ACCEPTS LAKENHEATH—QUITS WOLVERHAMPTON, MAY, 1838—LETTERS.

I HAD been at John-street, Wolverhampton, for three years, my engagement having been renewed by the church here annually. The period of my third annual engagement was on the eve of expiring, when I received from the congregation which I had so long visited at Lakenheath, an invitation to take the pastoral charge over them. The trustees of the chapel, and the whole of the congregation, except three persons, had all united in giving me this call; knowing, however, that there was a little church of seventeen members, who of course ought to be personally and carefully consulted, I declined returning an immediate answer, and adjourned the consideration of it till my next visit.

Meanwhile, I continued daily in prayer to God, in watching and waiting for Him to grant me further direction; at no other time, certainly, had I had greater need of circumspection in my movements. I had by this time (1838) ten children instrumentally to provide for; my eldest son was suffering from a most dangerous disorder,—disease of the heart; which incapacitated him from all exertion, and by

the orders of his physician he had relinquished his situation and returned home. My eldest daughter, who being in delicate health was learning to maintain herself at home, was attacked by influenza, forced to give up her employment, and laid by with all the symptoms of consumption. My wife's health began to give way under an accumulation of mental trials, and bodily ailments; and I had myself been suffering from repeated attacks of the gravel and stone. Moreover, in addition to my sorrows in the church, which I have glanced at, I heard of many around that district, who were turning the grace of God into licentiousness, and my spirit was deeply wounded. We had thus "bonds and afflictions" in abundance. And it was indeed a most solemn time with me! My experience lay in the 9th chapter of Jeremiah, and with him I then said from my very soul,—“O that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of way-faring men.”

Yet I was kept constantly at the throne, and almost continually on my watch-tower, and was set in ward whole nights. (Isaiah xxi. 8.) Truly with the weights I then had, it would have been impossible to be light.

In reference to the spirit just alluded to, I would observe as a weighty truth, that there are two spirits abhorred of God—*self-righteousness* and *licentiousness*; and Mr. Hart, as a well-instructed man of God, represents these as the two engines by which the church has, as between the upper and nether mill-stone, been ground to powder. Though they seem diametrically opposite principles, yet they approach each other very nearly indeed. That servant of Jesus Christ who does not both see and feel this truth, is half-blind and half-paralysed!

In this state of bonds and afflictions, I received an intimation of my removal to Wolverhampton being

not far off. As I was delivering my sermon one Sabbath morning as usual, a passage of Scripture came to my mind. It was very long, and came at intervals, but with *such power* as interrupted and almost broke the thread of my subject, and compelled me to bring out part of the words in the pulpit, though with little or no connexion with the context, (this was remarked by a friend present, and mentioned to me by him afterwards.) The words were these, "Son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls, and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not. And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them." Ezek. xxxiii. 30—33. I looked upon these words as indicating my removal; and others which came to me towards the close of my term, confirmed that impression: "Son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing." Ezek. xii. 3. I judged from these Scriptures, and from other indications, that I distinctly saw my way out of Wolverhampton.

My usual time for visiting Lakenheath had now arrived; and with it, the expiration of my renewed term at John-street. As I was on the point of starting on my journey, I received from the church a proposal once more to renew my engagement with them for the further period of a year; which proposal I declined.

At Lakenheath I met the little church, and put to them the question whether the invitation they had sent me to be their pastor had been unanimous; in reply to which, every hand was held up in the affirmative, and I was accordingly elected, and appointed to that charge among them.

I returned to Wolverhampton for a month, and in the presence of the church, resigned my charge: some of the members, I believe in real love and affection, censured me severely for this step, but before I reached home the Lord sweetly broke in upon my soul with peace, healed the wound, and showed me that I had done right in quitting them. There were others, again, who wished, from a feeling of hostility, to turn me out before the end of the month. But the Lord again appeared for me, and sent me these words three several times,—“Ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight; for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rereward.” Is. lii. 12.

At length I took leave of Wolverhampton in May, 1838, having served there three years. There were but few to whom I was not united in love: for several I felt especial friendship, and I still desire the best of wishes; and to the Lord's honour I must state, that they are “a people ready to communicate.” To most of them I can therefore still say,—Fare ye well, until we meet where Christ shall be all in all.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend.*

Wolverhampton, March 1838.

. . . . I HOPE the Lord's children at Lakenheath will be enabled to pray for me that I may have a safe journey, and be favoured with a praying spirit, and a meek and humble frame of mind. I know not what my Lord's will is with me, but I am willing to fall into his hands, and do whatsoever he requires. If he says, Stay, here I am. If he says, Go, here I am.

My principal fear is going, or staying, without his sanction, or special direction. I am only afraid of myself. In straits like these, there is nothing like standing still, and humbly waiting upon God until he makes the way of duty as plain as the way to the parish church. The Lord only knows what is best for us. He cannot err. We may, and shall, without Him. I dare not but distrust my own heart. In the present instance I believe I cannot distrust my own heart too much, nor trust it too little; what need have I of the Lord's guidance! But if in this matter the dear children of God in Lakenheath are enabled to say, The will of the Lord be done; and if we can simply wait upon God, with a sincere desire to find out the Lord's will, and seek that before our own, I have this confidence, that we shall be led aright. Lord, give us grace to watch and pray. Amen.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his Wife.*

Lakenheath, March 1838.

. . . . ALL has been hitherto very peaceful, but my great trial of meeting the church is to be on Monday evening. My mind is in general very calm, indeed more so than I could have expected. My chief concern is for the Lord's special direction. I am most anxious not to do wrong. I hope to be enabled to seek the Lord's sovereign directing hand, which is needful at all times, but especially at such seasons as these. I have a great desire to know how to do what is right, but I have not as yet received any intimation of what is the Lord's will with me at present.

“Just in the last distressing hour,
He oft displays delivering power;
The mount of danger is the place,
Where we shall see delivering grace.”

Yes, I do not even wish for direction one moment sooner than God sees good to give it. God's special guidance I greatly need, and I do hope that I shall not be with-

out it; I am even willing that he should lead me as the blind: I am afraid to err. O Lord, thou knowest my foolishness!

I hope he will not suffer the flesh to go first, but that he will enable me to say to it as Jehu said to one, "What hast thou to do with peace? Turn thee behind me." My soul, wait thou only upon God. O for a humble mind and a spirit of prayer.

I hope I am in a good measure resigned to anything that shall be for the glory of my God. I am surprised that I can sit so loosely; but still I know that none but God can keep quiet stray thoughts—those daughters of Jerusalem: until he does this, I may adjure them, but they will mind me no more than the wind. I have just now to meet at Mrs ———, what she terms David's ragged regiment. . . .

In faithful love to you and all my dear children, your loving husband,

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his Wife.*

Lakenheath, March 17, 1838.

. . . . I WAS under some fears that Henry was going to have another attack, from his appearance; however, I wish to be very thankful that the Lord has spared him to us a little longer. These events may well remind us of our fast hastening mortality. O that we may have grace given us to seek the Lord while it is called to-day! I have put up many prayers to God for him. How much it would rejoice my heart and yours to know that he was favoured earnestly to pray for himself. O what a mercy it is to be a praying soul! For He will regard the cry of the destitute, and will not despise their prayer. The Lord grant that he may be favoured to seek and find; to seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things needful shall be added thereto. Into the dear hands of Jesus I desire to commit him; I long much for the salvation of his soul. Dear Lord, have compassion on him! Give him my kindest love, and tell him I hope he will endeavour to

be as still as he can, (so as not to increase the action of the heart,) and to read his Bible frequently and carefully,—especially the Psalms and the New Testament; and may the Lord enable him to unite, with the reading of the word, the holy exercises of frequent and fervent prayer, knowing that religion is a personal thing. May God be merciful unto him, and lift upon him the light of his countenance, and give him peace, that he may do well to the last.

I could not but feel for you, for him, and for the dear children, in reading your faithful account of his affliction. Poor hearts! it must have been a trying night, but I bless God that he has brought you safely through. He is a very present help in the time of trouble; and who knows, but we may yet be favoured to know that this is amongst the *all* things that shall work together for our good. You may be sure of my poor prayers and commiseration.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his Wife.*

Lakenheath, March 1838.

. . . . I WAS relieved to find that dear Henry was a little better. I hope he will be careful of taking cold, as the weather is very changeable. It is now snowing; I have a long ride to —, and to return after preaching in a cold barn. Jesus Christ is now often driven into barns and outhouses.

Some months ago, when the congregation met here for the purpose of inviting me amongst them, with the exception of three persons, all were unanimous in the matter. On Monday last, at the church meeting, all the members present voted for my coming among them. But when the second question was put, which was for a mixed communion, Satan showed his cloven foot: there appeared to me a sort of confederacy. Ten were hotly against, and six for mixed communion. I told them that if they should adhere to their intention of excluding their brethren, I should merely

preach and administer the Lord's Supper, but I did not think I should join them until we were all brought into one mind on this subject. They all, without one exception, expressed a wish that I should come amongst them, even upon this plan ; and they undertook to unite in helping to support my family. This is how it stands at present, waiting for God to decide it in my conscience. If he were to give me a promise, I believe I should no longer hesitate. May he be pleased to show his poor unworthy servant what he would have him to do.

As for mixed communion, I am more favourable to it than when I left home. Two or three mornings in last week, I was *awakened* very early with these words : " The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary ; he wakeneth me morning by morning ; he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." After this I had such scripture openings of the doctrine of baptism, as I was never before acquainted with. And I am neither afraid nor ashamed to let my brethren have the free exercise of the *right of private judgment* in the matter. I have had some heavy trials here, but it has been pretty well with my soul. My God has, I hope, brought my heart a little nearer to him. O that I might be favoured to abide in his love.

EDWARD BLACKSTOCK.

My dear wife and I, with our ten children, left Wolverhampton in an omnibus for Birmingham, and thence to Cambridge, where a van took us to Ely. We passed the night there among kind friends, and entered Lakenheath 3rd May, 1838. We were most kindly and hospitably entertained during ten weeks, at the house of Mr. F. Smith, and at that of his sister, (our party being large we divided,) while a house was being prepared for us. We found it most comfortable, our friends having done their utmost to render it so.

I agreed to have no salary, but was to receive the product of the four quarterly collections, and what the Lord might be pleased to send beside.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend.*

Lakenheath, 1838.

. . . . I SINCERELY pity the state of the Lord's dear children ——. O Lord, look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities. I never think of —— without some feeling of distress, but very often with a sigh. I am grieved to think I have laboured nearly nine years there, and have been so little understood. What a small handful of good fruits. Woe is me, for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits. I am like the grape-gleanings of the vintage, when there is no cluster to eat; my soul desired the first ripe fruits. I should like to have seen God's blessed heritage there, in a state of unity, brotherly love, peace, and concord: but woe is me, my mother, thou hast borne me a man of strife. I received many deep wounds while I was at ——, but blessed be God, if I know my own heart, they are all forgiven. May the dear Lord forgive them too. So far as I have done wrong to any man, I desire to mourn in secret for it. You shall have my prayers and good wishes. Lord, spare thy people, and give not over thine heritage unto reproach. May God help poor Zion: but why do I despond, for "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early." May we be still, and know that he is God. Ps. xlv.

I was a little surprised that you should know where to find me, for though we are ill qualified for journeying, our journies are as long, as frequent, and as quickly performed as the most. I have to say with Paul, "I have no certain dwelling-place, and no continuing city," nor shall have until I reach the threshold of the new Jerusalem, where I hope to stand as a pillar in the temple of my God, to go no more out.

“From Egypt lately freed
By the Redeemer’s grace,
A rough and thorny path we tread,
In hopes to see his face.”

The hope of glory is my soul’s sheet anchor, and almost the only comfort I have at present.

I am sorry to inform you that Satan is doing his utmost here to divide God’s heritage, and I am doing my utmost in the Lord’s strength to keep them together. Indeed the Baptists are dividing, or being divided nearly all over the country. Surely this does not savour well, nor augur well. But I leave it.

My son Henry’s general health is a little improved since he came into the country, but the heart-disease is no better ; it is said to be out of the reach of the art of medicine. However, I am thankful he is as he is.

I think it necessary to state to you, what will, perhaps, at first especially, be unwelcome news to many of my real friends. A little alteration has been made in my mind on the subject of baptism. For myself, I still prefer immersion to any other mode now in use ; but I am cheerfully made willing to allow the *free exercise* of the right of private judgment (in non-essentials) to my Christian brethren. This has given great offence to many of my old acquaintances, and has brought me much opposition from different quarters ; but I esteem it a blessed change, and wish that every godly man in England were of the same mind. (Isa. xxvi. 2.)

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend.*

Lakenheath, December 1838.

SINCE my last attack of hæmorrhage, I have only attempted to speak once, in a low tone of voice.

Dr. Bayley says that this situation is too bleak for me ; for if I only go out for ten minutes, the cold seizes my chest, so that I am almost confined to my dwelling. I certainly do not think I should live long in this place ; I there-

fore hope the Lord will soon either bear me to a less exposed situation, or favour me to breathe in a milder region, where there is neither sin nor sorrow.

What a changing scene is life, even to those who appear least exposed to changes. What an unspeakable mercy it is that God declares that all things work together for the best to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose. O how often am I ready to say, All these things are against me, because my Lord's providences do so frequently *seem* to cross his promises ; whilst they certainly and effectually cross my carnal expectations, and show me what a fool I am. O when shall I be passive in his hands, and know no will but his. When shall my dull heart learn to know that the "heavens rule." I often pray that I may be as tempered clay in the hands of the great Potter, who forms his vessel as he pleases. O for a humble mind.

I will tell you what I *want* : I want a heart to trust my God, even when I cannot trace Him,—in adversity and in prosperity,—when I suffer need, and when I abound, in sickness and in health ; when he blights my comforts, or when he raises some pleasant gourd over my head. I want to learn to trust Him, let the wind blow from what point it may, and when it does not blow at all. I want to lie down, and weep, and bless his name when he chastises, and go softly and humbly when the rod is hung up again. I want a heart kept clean from all idolatry ; and my cry is, Let no sin have the dominion over me. When my Lord's sweet presence is not enjoyed, I want to lie languishing at the foot of the Cross. I want to be made thankful when he gives, and when he withholds ; and with *what* he gives, and with *what* he withholds. . . . For frames of spirit, I want to prize that frame most which my gracious God likes best. I want to say, "For me to live is Christ," that I might be able to say, "for me to die is gain." Lord, help me to take up and bear a daily cross, and when thou puttest the old man of sin in me upon the rack, and dost rack every limb of him, help me to rejoice. I would to God I could sweetly say, "I am

crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who *loved me* and gave himself *for me*." I want to be able with more inward satisfaction to say who *loved me*, and gave himself *for me*. It is indeed a great thing to say. In the ministry now, when life's lamp seems almost burnt out, I am only beginning to begin to learn. I want to love all the real ministers of Christ, as if they were so many Pauls, even though they should seem to have no regard for me. The whole family of God upon earth I should like to love, impartially, deeply, and steadily, —without looking for *returns of love*, or having any unpleasant feeling when, in the day of my calamity, I see them, like the Priest and the Levite, pass by on the other side.

I want to know *how* to *preach*, not with natural eloquence, or natural fire and energy, but with *power*,—that power which awakens, quickens, convinces, saves, and melts in deep and unfeigned repentance, thorough and lasting. O how little is there of this. In the ministry I have learnt almost nothing, because I have not yet learnt to be nothing,—to blow a silver trumpet, or a ram's horn, to be the chairman, or stop a gap.

I want to be able to bear a "Hosanna, hosanna!" or "Crucify him, crucify him!" with calm indifference. I should like a steady burning zeal to preach the doctrine of the cross, and instrumentally and plenteously to diffuse the savour of the name of Christ as the only aim and end of my life, and yet bear to be suspected, thwarted, and withstood. O, to *be nothing*. O, for a peaceful conscience! O, highly favoured, blessed man of God, Paul, however, didst thou learn that lesson?—"I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

soul. For about four hours successively my mind was wholly absorbed in these meditations. What was to me still more remarkable, the following morning early the same passages awakened me—"He wakeneth me morning by morning," &c., and "The doctrine of baptisms;" when my mind was led afresh, and with increasing light and power, in the same train of thought; and I was obliged to admit to myself that my strictness (in excluding my brethren in the Lord from his table) began to be shaken to the foundation. Yet, from fear of erring, I took no step in the matter but this,—I carried the subject more carefully to the throne of grace; and continued to do so for months, without mentioning the subject to any human being.

At length it pressed so heavily upon my spirit as to constrain me to set apart two whole days for prayer, and examination of the word of God. The only other aid within my reach in this research was a Concordance, treatise or commentary I had none. The desire of my heart was, after prayer, to have the Lord's blessed help and guidance, and with that aid to examine not a few passages, but *every text* I could find bearing on the subject of baptism in the Old and New Testament; and in doing this, first to take each text separately, and discover, if possible, its own independent bearing, without any previous bias; and next to compare Scripture with Scripture, and observe the result of this comparison. This plan I adhered to: I went through this examination very carefully, and twice over at the least, and the result of it satisfied me that the word of God gave, or permitted to me, liberty to break bread in the Lord's Supper to all godly persons, whether adult Baptists or Pædobaptists.

Having come to this conclusion soberly and deliberately, as I then thought, and endeavouring to keep

the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, without being influenced by the fear of man on one side or the other, I seriously purposed not to keep this conviction locked up in my own breast, but honestly to act upon it; yet aiming to act in the fear of God, to watch his hand, and to submit my conscience humbly to him in all things. My sufferings at the hands of man I foresaw would be great, but I felt prepared to face all, and cast myself at the feet of my heavenly Father.

This decision I communicated to my dear wife, who opposed it with many tears, urging the sufferings I should encounter, and imploring me to remain where we had stood for so many years. But in the conviction that God's word was on my side, I remained firm and immovable. On my next visit to Lakenheath I stated my intentions to three or four of my most intimate friends there, who rejoiced at my decision. At that time I gave it no further publicity.

This was a short time before the expiration of my year's engagement at Wolverhampton, at the end of which I again visited the little church at Lakenheath. It was a Baptist church, consisting of seventeen members; they had sent me an invitation to be their pastor, the consideration of which I deferred until I should meet them personally. The result of this church meeting has been already stated in part, but my design was to ascertain from them, not only their wishes on this point, but also on the question of open communion. For though it was a Baptist church, there were among the congregation several Independents, who had not sat down to the Lord's table for twenty years. Accordingly, at the first church meeting, after the question of my undertaking the pastoral charge over them had been put and

carried unanimously, I addressed them in a few words, stating my views on church communion, and exhorting them to receive into their communion such of the Independents as were enabled to show the work of God in their souls; and then put that question to them. About six voted in favour of, and ten against my proposal, which was therefore defeated. But as notwithstanding their rejection of my plan, they all earnestly desired me to be their pastor, I acceded to their request, expressing my great regret that they could not receive into fellowship their brethren in the faith. I had now, in as harmless and peaceful a manner as could well be employed, made public those views of Christian unity and peace which I cordially wished might extend to every true member of Christ to the ends of the earth. My intention was at that time defeated by circumstances beyond my control; but the Searcher of all hearts knows that I loved that people so dearly, that I would have done anything, consistently with a good conscience, to promote their real prosperity, unity, and peace.

During my residence at Lakenheath, I visited Ely, and there thrice administered the Lord's Supper to a little church consisting of mixed Independents and Baptists. This was the extent of my offence in the eyes of the strict Baptists before I came to London.

From the time of this open avowal of my sentiments on communion at Lakenheath, my name has been held up by many of the strict Baptists to such reproach as might be due to a murderer, or other person convicted of some heinous crime against society and the laws of their country. Many hot and fiery spirits have been stirred up, as though determined, if possible, to rid the earth of me. I have had to run

tlet, and he was the bravest soldier who could the sharpest lash. I was condemned with-
irry, and without the slightest opportunity
forded me of defence or explanation. But
I then suppose that John Bunyan had,
ame cause, passed through the same fiery
I had not at that time read his work on
ect.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend.*

Lakenheath, September 25, 1838.

OR tell you how many different feelings agitated
on looking over your letter this day. In writing
— I had not the remotest thought of pecuniary
, indeed we have not known any kind of want
came here. I have no salary, nor any agree-
Ve came in May, and have had one collection,
by friends to 15%. This is all I have received
ie labourer's hire. Both doves and ravens have
ployed to feed us. The barrel of meal, I assure
not wasted, nor has the cruse of oil failed. I
; tell how it has come, or from whence, but I
to the honour of God, and for the credit of some
ple here, we have not had as yet the prospect of
lessed be the name of Jehovah-jireh !

you have been led, in the providence of God, to
e so handsomely, I might say, so miraculously,
half, my wife and I, with our dear children, unite
ting our warmest and best acknowledgments to
to ——. May the Lord bless you, and be with
ery trying hour.

emy of souls, working by one or two instruments,
st produced a division amongst God's little flock
ace, so that I have had sorrow upon sorrow. No
wounds have ever entered half so deeply into me
rcings of God's children. I have had to make

that bitter complaint,—“ My mother’s children were angry with me.” O may the Lord hasten that happy time when the envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off. . . . Six weeks ago I ruptured a blood vessel. . . . My mind is greatly tried; I have had no deliverances or promises since my affliction, yet through grace, no sin or error is indulged in,—no idol rakes my breast. I can say, None but Jesus ! he is the precious jewel in my esteem.

My eldest son is almost at death’s door from disease of the heart, which he has had for nearly two years, but I have reason to hope that he belongs to Jesus.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

CHAPTER XXIII.

[1838.]

LAKENHEATH—DEATH OF SON HENRY—LETTERS TO HIM FROM HIS PARENTS IN 1835-36—"RECOLLECTIONS OF A BELOVED SON, BY HIS FATHER."

AFTER we had been at Lakenheath a few months, our dear son Henry, who was about twenty-two years of age, died of ossification of the heart; but I believe that he went to glory.

His remains lie in Lakenheath churchyard, close by the grave of Mr. Lock, late of Providence Chapel.

This bereavement was a severe trial to us all, but especially so to his mother, to whom he was much endeared. The blow impaired her health, and brought on a nervous affection, which remained for some time, and which proved a sore trial to me, and a heavy addition to my other sorrows.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his son Henry.**

Wolverhampton, 1835.

MY DEAREST HENRY,

We were pleased at the sight of a letter from you, but very sorry to find that you had been so ill. Your mother shed many tears, and the children, to whom I read your letter, cried very much. You may be sure we are all much grieved, and that we all shall be exceedingly thankful to hear that you are recovered. Poor Hannah will feel it very much when she comes home. I am very

* Letters from Mr. and Mrs. B. to their son Henry, in 1835-6, (while he was at Potton,) are here inserted, to precede the "Recollections" written by his father.

glad that you look upon your mother and me as being kind and affectionate to you ; the former we sincerely wish to be, the latter I am sure we are. I should very much like you, by return of post, to write again if it were only eight lines, to inform us exactly how you are. Should you get worse, which I hope will not be the case, you must let us know, and come in the inside of the coach to Birmingham, and I will, if possible, meet you there. But if the Lord raises you up, as I earnestly wish He may, the time of your stay is now getting very short, when we trust you will be brought amongst us, to leave us no more for any length of time whilst life lasts. I have already prayed to God for you ; so has your dear mother. O that the kind Lord would be pleased to teach you to pray for yourself ! You have often heard me prove that we are not to rest upon our own merit, because we have none, and can obtain none ; and that a man must be *born again* before he can enter into the kingdom of God. As every man in the fall is unholy, he must receive a *new* nature from God ; and as every man is a sinner, he must obtain *pardon* before he can possibly enter into the kingdom of God's glory. Both these come from God, both are bestowed freely upon the most unworthy. O, how thankful I should be for this affliction, if the Lord were to make it the means of your being brought to see the sinfulness of sin, the vanity and emptiness of the world, and to feel your lost state as a sinner before God, and then to cry for mercy through Christ, until the Lord should be pleased to grant you his salvation. This is my desire and prayer ; then, my dear Henry, you would be prepared for any event that might befall you. To know that God in Christ is a man's present and everlasting portion, is the best and only true knowledge ; this is a sure and certain remedy against all the evils of this life, and takes away the fear of death. This brings the promise of the life that now is, and what is far more, of that which is to come. You might then say, "The Lord is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation ; my father's God, and I will exalt him." That you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help you in every time of need,

my earnest desire and fervent prayer. We are all in
rable health at present. I continued a little weak, &c.,
r you left, but am now as well I think as I have been
some years. I hope you will not venture out too soon
ou should still continue to amend, as in that complaint
e is always much danger of a relapse. Your dear mother
very little time to write ; however I will leave her a little
e, and remain, my dear Henry, your very affectionate
er,

EDWARD BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her son Henry.*

DEARLY BELOVED CHILD, 1835.
Your very affectionate letter has moved me to the
erest sympathy for you, and I feel that I would gladly
ifice much of this world's good to have you with me.
ar I shall not have much ease of mind until I hear
n you again. You have always had a very tender place
ny affections, my dear Henry, and I think I never go
rest without thinking of you, and remembering you
re God, into whose gracious hands I have many times
mitted you. O may He remember you in mercy, make
your bed in your sickness, bless the trial to you, and
ore you to health again ; for this I have besought him.
ay He answer my poor prayer. Your dear brothers
sisters are very affectionate to you, they feel *much* for
l. May the dear Lord grant you a speedy recovery,
may your life be spent to his praise. Accept my most
ctionate parental love. Farewell, my dear boy. May
Almighty bless and restore thee.

Your loving mother,

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his son Henry.*

Wolverhampton, 1835.

. . . Your dear mother and all your brothers and
ers send their kindest love to you. And I, for my
1 part, wish to remind you that you are not to live for

ever in this world ; this life is but a dream : he that would possess *realities* must obtain them from above ; here all is a shadow ; there, all is substance. For myself, I find that no place suits me, however excellent, without the divine *presence*, but with that, I am as content as I expect to be in this world. The sweet presence of Jesus makes a prison into a palace, and a wilderness to bloom like Eden. To me, at this time, life is a miserable burden without Christ, but in his favour is life, and his lovingkindness is better than life. Through God's mercy, I can at times say, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Yet I do not go without my trials and discouragements. "Heavenness endures for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." O for a prayerful thankful heart. My dear Henry, I have often thought about you, felt for you, and prayed for you. You are a child of many prayers ; may the good Lord teach you to pray for yourself. Real prayer is no skulking business, for ardent prayer opens heaven, and lets down a flood of glory on the soul.

My dear son, God is holy and just, you are a polluted sinner ; if you know it not, the case is still worse. In thought, word, and deed, you have often sinned against God. Your heart is unclean, therefore you need the great change of a new and heavenly birth ; your sins are many, and you need a full and free pardon. The Holy Spirit alone can work the former, and Christ can bestow the latter ; and will if, under a sense of your lost state, you are led to seek him. "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." May you be led to seek for life and salvation in the Redeemer, and O may you be brought to know him, whom to know is life everlasting ; then through his abounding grace you will live holily, and die joyfully.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her son Henry.*

Wolverhampton, 1835.

MY DEARLY BELOVED BOY,

When your letter came, we had no prospect of sending you an invitation to W—— ; you know our journey was very expensive, and we had no means. I

prayed many times for the Lord to open a way in his providence for us to see you here. I have had many anxious thoughts about you, and you will believe me when I tell you that we all ardently desire to see you; we have shed many tears about you, and you have never been forgotten at the throne of grace. Your dear father has daily remembered you, both in the family and in private, and so have I. We know that we cannot commit you into better hands than those of our God; and blessed be his name, we have at times a hope that we shall yet be spared to see our seed a seed to serve God, and a generation to call him blessed.

I dare say you will like Wolverhampton very much, it is a finer town than I expected to find it,—a great deal of business going on, and people appear to get a good living, though some of the working part of the community labour like horses, and many, alas, spend it in riot; but you will see how the grandeur of England is kept up even by the labour of the poor man. O, then may we always feel for the poor, through whose toil, as a means, we enjoy so many conveniences. We have got a nice dwelling in a very quiet respectable neighbourhood. . . . May the dear Lord make us very thankful. The interest here is small, but the town is a wide field for a Gospel minister to labour in, and if the Lord should be graciously pleased to work by your father's instrumentality, our removal may prove a great blessing to us.

The congregation is gradually increasing, and the Lord appears to bless his own word to the souls of his children amongst us, and your dear father feels at times much of the *power* and *presence* of God in the services of the sanctuary, which makes him very happy; yet it does not appear to be the will of our heavenly Father to let us go without trials, and in our right minds, we do not wish to be without them, for we daily feel that

“ Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to prayer,
Trials bring us to his feet,
Lay us low and keep us there.”

Your loving mother,

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her son Henry.*

Wolverhampton, 1835.

MY VERY DEAR HENRY,

We all think much about you, my dear boy, but this comforts us, that your time shortens; the 1st of March will soon be here; we often count the days, and are glad as they elapse. I look forward with pleasure to the coming spring, when I hope to have all my children together again. Through the mercy of God, we are all in good health; your dear father went yesterday to Birmingham, to preach there last night; he returns to-day.

I thought it very kind in Mrs. ——— thinking of you in your illness; give my thanks to her, and also to my dear Mrs. and Miss Haggar, they have always been abundantly kind to all of us, and I wish ever to acknowledge it, and to love them sincerely in the Lord. Write to us on Monday next, for we are very anxious to hear from you again. I hope, my dear child, your afflictions will be sanctified to your soul, and be the means, in God's hand, of leading you to seek after eternal life, and then you will have to say with the holy Psalmist, "It was good for me that I was afflicted." Oh how many times have I had to bless God for afflictions; they have been the most profitable seasons, and amongst the sweetest moments which my soul has known.

When the Lord has been graciously pleased to bless me with godly sorrow for sin, and made me feel that I am the chief of sinners, I have then been obliged to seek a refuge in the wounded side of Christ, and I have found it a safe hiding-place from the just vengeance of an offended God. You know Christ says, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." He is true to his word. If we are constrained to go to Christ for pardon, it is because the Spirit of God has taught us our need of pardon, and because the love, the everlasting love of our heavenly Father, has sweetly drawn us to the Mediator between God and man, in whom we behold the fulness of the godhead bodily, (or in a body like our own;) we see (by faith) that he is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him, and

that he *will* save them. O then, what sweet encouragement do these eternal certainties afford unto us; what incentives they are to press through every difficulty so that we may win Christ, and be found in him without spot. Have you ever, my dear child, felt yourself a sinner? "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." O, may the Lord, in rich unmerited mercy, bring you to a saving knowledge of your lost estate by nature, and then show you the all-sufficiency, the suitability and preciousness of Christ as a Saviour. May you be constrained to cast your soul, with all its vast concerns, upon Him; believing that none ever perished there; then, my dear child, it will all be well with you, come life come death. If you should be spared to see many days, you will have a God to lean upon in every trial through life, and oh, what a comfort is that! What solace it affords to the mind in seasons of difficulty, to know that we have a God whose watchful eye is ever upon us for good; a Saviour, who died to redeem us, who takes our sins away, and imputes unto us his own holiness; who will never leave nor forsake us, either in this world or in that which is to come: a knowledge of this sweetens the bitters in life's cup, and takes away the sting of death. O, may you be enabled to say, with the holy apostle and with all the Lord's dear family, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift." One thing have I desired of the Lord (for you), that will I seek after, that you may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever! This is my prayer to God for you, my dear child—may the Lord answer it in mercy. Your dear brothers and sisters all unite with me and your dear father in every expression of love and affection, while I desire you to believe me

Your very affectionate mother,

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her son Henry.*

Wolverhampton, January 1, 1836.

MY DEARLY BELOVED HENRY,

This is new year's day morning: your father and I have just been saying, if our dear boy is spared we shall

have him under our roof in a few weeks; and I can assure you we anticipate the time with heartfelt pleasure, when our dear Henry will complete the domestic circle. March will soon be here; keep your spirits up, my dear boy, and I hope we shall all be favoured to meet at Wolverhampton under the blessing of the Almighty. We should have been glad to have heard something of the feelings of your mind in your affliction; we are anxiously concerned that God in his mercy might be graciously pleased to make it a blessing unto you, by leading you to see and feel your lost estate by nature and practice, by constraining you to cry for pardon with fervency of soul, and that he would in tender pity and divine compassion grant you the remission of your sins, through the blood of Jesus.

O, my dear boy, this is the greatest concern we have about you. If we could see you brought to know the Lord, we should then be sure that all would be well with you, both for time and for eternity. If you are blessed with any concern about your soul, be not shy in telling me, for I am sure we should greatly rejoice to hear of it. You know what God says, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth;" and again, "They that seek me early shall find me." Oh, my dear child, what sweet encouragement those words afford; what kind and gracious admonitions they are; you have been a child of many prayers, and we ardently long to see our prayers answered; you have been a good and an affectionate child to us, but we desire to see you possess the one thing needful,—I mean, the knowledge of yourself as a sinner, and the blessed hope of Christ as your Saviour. O that our eyes may be favoured to see this happy change wrought in you by the power of the Holy Spirit! it is my heart's desire, my fervent prayer. Your dear brothers and sisters are all affectionately concerned about you, and desire their best love to you; you do not know how often you are talked of and thought about; we count up the weeks and the days, and are glad as the time expires.

Your most affectionate mother,

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

A FEW RECOLLECTIONS,
SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF A BELOVED SON,
WRITTEN BY HIS FATHER.

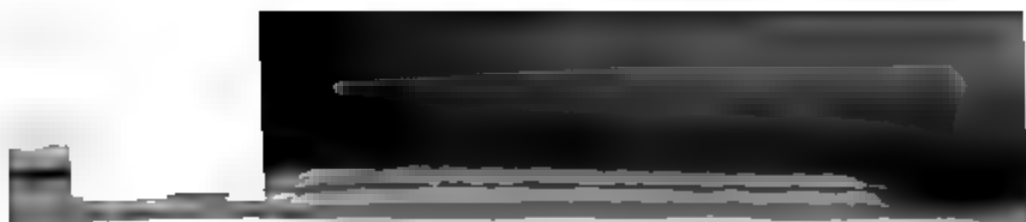
My dear son Henry was born in Manchester, November 16, 1816, in the autumn of that memorable year when the Lord had powerfully called me by his grace.

It was a period of great depression in trade, provisions of all kinds were very dear, and employment scarce, and we were often at a loss for the necessaries of life. But I had a gracious God to whom I could carry all my difficulties. He heard my cries for temporal, as well as for spiritual assistance; and often answered my prayers in a remarkable manner, bringing us through every strait and trial. Our God can make a way in the desert !

Henry being our second, and then only surviving child, was the object of our tenderest care and solicitude, and up to eight years of age he appeared to have good health, but at this period he began to suffer from obstructions, followed by bleedings of the nose which lasted for several hours, and attended by swelling of the feet and legs to such a degree, as to prevent his walking. These attacks injured his constitution, and at the age of ten, rheumatic fever supervened, recurring two or three times in the year, with renewal of the bleedings of the nose.

In March, 1831, he entered the employment of a draper at Potton, Bedfordshire, where he remained five years, and served as apprentice (though without any written agreement), obtaining the approbation and esteem of his employers. At the end of that time he joined his family at Wolverhampton.

His health was so delicate, and caused such uneasiness to his parents, that they wished him to defer taking a situation until he should have recruited his strength ; but he was anxious for employment, in order to lessen our expenses.



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much fortitude, (a virtue in which I, alas! come short.) But what I endured on *his* account, and how many whole nights I passed in anxious watchings, I cannot tell! I may say, that in mental ejaculations I put up thousands of prayers to God for my son. O how often was I led to beseech the Father of mercies, that my dear Henry might never die until by faith he had seen the Lord's Christ. His mother's anxious solicitude was equally great. I do not consider that prayer is the procuring cause of man's salvation, but I know that God has often poured out a spirit of prayer, before he has bestowed the appointed blessing. "For all these things I will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."

Yet, until within the last two years of his life, I often feared that I should never see a spiritual change wrought in Henry.

On one occasion, at Wolverhampton, he was so ill that it became a question whether he would live to see the morning. I asked him if I should pray with him. He said, "Yes." In the deepest distress of mind I knelt down; but scarcely had I opened my lips, when such a *confident, powerful spirit* of prayer came upon me, that every sentence appeared to come down from heaven into my heart, and from thence to go back again into heaven! So that I could say—

"My soul, ask what thou wilt,
Thou canst not be too bold,
Since His own blood for thee He spilt,
What else can He withhold?"

I was led to ask for the salvation of Henry's soul, and also for the Lord to give *me* a *token* for good. The token I asked was—that he would rebuke the malady, and raise my son up again. Henry appeared to join fervently in the prayer; and the next morning when I entered the room (though I dreaded to look at him), he smiled expressively, as if he would say—"Father, I know the Lord has heard your prayer for me." He then said, "I feel much better." The Lord kindly raised him up once more, and from that period I had a hope that he would not

be removed before the Saviour should be revealed to his soul.

From this time, which was a year and a half before his death, I noticed such an alteration in his spirit and deportment, as led me to hope that the Lord had wrought in him a spiritual change. How often was I struck with my dear Henry's appearance when listening to the preached word in John-street, Wolverhampton! he seemed to hear for eternity, with deeply marked attention and thoughtful interest, and with a sweet gravity of countenance expressive of a little hope, and much inward sorrow. Some judicious persons about this period, spoke of him as one of the best hearers in the place. That he was much liked and fervently prayed for, I am fully aware. Many of the Lord's people often surprised me by their confident conviction of Henry being a vessel of mercy. I believe they gathered their hopes from their spirit of prayer to God for him. May the Lord return them a hundredfold! For my own part, knowing that conversion is a *great work*, I dreaded being deceived about it; perhaps I carried these fears too far. My dear son was also fearful of being a hypocrite, and maintained silence on the subject until he could do so no longer; this backwardness to declare what he knew and felt threw my soul into heavy bondage, and often drove me to a throne of grace. I believe that it was in answer to these prayers that Henry's lips were first opened to his father.

On one or two occasions, at Wolverhampton, some things that he said encouraged me to hope that he was seeking the Lord. But it was not till the last three or four months of his life, that he became unreserved and open. After he was confined to his room, it was my custom to read a psalm or chapter, and then expound it to him in an easy way; I then questioned him carefully, and after some serious conversation I offered a prayer to God for him. In all this Henry joined me with great earnestness; and in all my experience I may truly say, that I never saw any one more careful in his answers, or more cautious to avoid expressing what he did not feel.

Some of his remarks in these conversations will not be uninteresting. "I have seen," said he, "the emptiness and vanity of this world, and I have been struck at the sight of the hand of God going out against me, cutting down all my earthly schemes and carnal expectations. I have been gradually brought to know, by feeling, that I am a lost and ruined sinner, without help, or hope in myself. I am, especially at times, much distressed about my soul, and do own, that if God should condemn me, He is just!"

At other times, alluding to his religious belief, he said, "I do believe the Bible to be the word of truth,—that test by which every man, sooner or later, must be tried. I solemnly declare that I am brought to believe that Jesus Christ was, and is, the eternal Jehovah, and that no man can be saved but on the ground of his work alone. I am brought to feel my great need of Christ; and that a sound, *spiritual change* must be wrought upon every one who enters the kingdom of God."

In saying this my dear son covered his face with his hands and burst into tears.

I have reason to hope that Henry first heard the word effectually from the unworthy lips of his own father, in John-street Chapel. But his best times of hearing were in Jehovah Jireh Chapel, at Lakenheath, on the few occasions which his severe illness allowed of his attending. Here (he afterwards told me) he heard with power and sweetness; he found his case minutely described, and he was raised to the enjoyment of hope, comfort, and peace in Christ. And being at such seasons delivered from all his fears, and feeling Christ, as a Saviour, to be very precious to his soul, he was greatly encouraged and comforted.

While staying at Leicester for the benefit of his health, he told me that he had heard Mr. Chamberlain with comfort, and that he had experienced what the minister was then describing. Two or three months before his death at Ely, he heard Mr. Turner, of Sunderland, with great satisfaction and comfort.

For months previous to his death he would say to me, "Father, I have no desire to live but for one thing, that is, to be favoured to *know my interest in Christ*." The world is quite given up by me ; all I want is to know that *I belong to Christ*. I want to feel sure that He is mine. O, if He would be pleased to show me *that*, I should neither be afraid of dying, nor of the pains of death : with the knowledge that Christ is mine, I am quite willing to die at any moment."

During the last four or five months of his life, he spent much of his time in reading and prayer ; at first he read several godly books, chiefly of an experimental nature, but afterwards, and of his own accord, he laid them all aside for the Bible.

We have good reason to believe that he frequently retired for private prayer ; but in this he sought concealment as much as possible. Although at length he was wholly prevented from attending public worship at chapel, yet, the name of the Lord be praised, I never saw any one more diligent in the use of private means.

For some time before his departure, although not blessed with full assurance of interest in the love of God, and though at times not without his fears, yet he appeared generally to possess sweet hope, comfort, and peace.

While we were living in the house of Mr. F. Smith at Lakenheath (as he afterwards told me) he was one day in very great distress about his immortal soul, when the following passage was *powerfully* applied to his mind :— " ' Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.' Psalm lxxviii. 13. He said that he had never enjoyed so much comfort and so much of the peace of God, as he did after the powerful application of that scripture. That pleasant frame of spirit lasted for several days. Some weeks after this, when he was very ill in body, and greatly distressed in mind, he crawled out of the house into the garden, and on a sudden, and in a powerfully comforting manner, these words were applied— " Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be igno-

rant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not : thou O Lord, art our Father." Isa. lxi. 16. He said that under these words he felt blessed with peace and comfort ; still, when the savour of these divine things was gone, some of his fears would return. A few weeks before he was taken from us, when reading the Scriptures, that striking passage in Isaiah xxx. 19—21, was comfortably applied to his mind : " For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem : thou shalt weep no more : he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry ; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers : and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." The power attending these words seemed to give him fresh light, hope, and encouragement.

I never saw anything like strong faith in Henry ; yet, I trust that he was born again, and that as a babe, he was favoured to receive the sincere milk of the word. In the several conversations which we had together, I never remember to have heard from his lips a single expression bordering upon legality ; his testimony was small, but remarkably sound. His faith was weak, he seldom rose higher than a comfortable hope of salvation ; yet, considering the serious nature of his bodily affliction, it appeared to me that, for several months before his decease, he was very evidently and comfortly supported in his mind.

For upwards of a year and a half before he died, he was known to have enlargement of the heart ; there was constantly a strong throbbing, and it occasionally increased to such violence that at several yards' distance from him I have distinctly heard its beatings ! And for the last few months, about every three or four days, he bled at the nose, and sometimes for fifteen hours successively. On such occasions he has sometimes lost one pound and three quarters of blood. His sufferings were very severe, and two or three days before his removal he told me he had

in which his heart was united. During the last two days of his life he consumed refined food and he evidently anticipated the near approach of death. He had towards the latter part of his illness less light than he had had previously, and he seemed more tried; still he was in the possession of hope, and I never heard one word expressive of a doubt concerning his interest in Christ. About seven hours before he died, he said, "O, father, I shall never see the morning light," and he added, in a manner that I can never forget—"What a solemn launch!"

After this, he was almost deprived of the power of speech, and during three hours the expression of his countenance was that of trial and distress. About five in the evening, this expression altered to one of much tranquillity; the change was very striking. During the whole of this solemn day, and especially of those three hours, I was frequently in prayer, and almost in an agony of soul; I had then a most sharp and severe conflict with the enemy as much so as I have ever had in my life, and this sore struggle was for my dear son. No sooner was that attack over, than these solemn words fell upon my spirit, and brought me down again—"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Thus scarcely was one enemy vanquished than another approached! The pains of death now came upon my son's poor body, and upon my poor soul at the same moment. If ever I understood what it was to "do business in deep waters," it was at this crisis!

In the midst of this storm, I said to him—"My dear boy, are you afraid to cast yourself into the arms of Christ?" He summoned all his strength, and answered, "No." He then took a most affecting and affectionate leave of us all, and he remained perfectly sensible to the last. About an hour before his solemn departure, I said, "My dear boy, is it peace?" With all the energy he possessed he replied, "Yes." This was the last word he uttered. That passage—"Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace," had been on my mind for several days.

About an hour after this he had one violent struggle, after which he threw his head back, and gently breathed his last. He died on Friday evening, 19th October, 1838.

I loved this son as I loved my own soul, and I do hope he is now in the realms of the blessed, praising the glory of redeeming grace, where the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick; and where the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.

I think that one cause of my dear son's sinking so low in his feelings, during the last ten days of his life, was the depression of my own mind at that time; I had recently ruptured a blood vessel in the windpipe, and was seldom able to speak much to him, or to pray with him; and being under heavy trials and temptations, I was brought into deep soul-distress; the knowledge of this was sure to burden the mind of one who loved his parents as Henry did.

Being unable to preach the Sabbath after his death, I hastily drew up a short account of his last days, which was read to my people in the morning and evening of that day. I had been praying to God that evening that He would grant me another token for good concerning the dear deceased; and while so employed, one of our friends came in from the chapel much affected. He said that Henry's dying testimony had been much blessed to the people, and that he thought there had scarcely been a dry eye in the chapel. Instantly these words were applied to my mind—"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained strength, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger." Blessed be God for this word of consolation! And, when I review the last twelve months of my dear son's life,—his conversation, his deadness to the world, his exemplary deportment, and what I considered to be the fruits of the Spirit in him, I think I have great cause to adore the mercy of God in his behalf, and to say, Let grace have all the glory! All praise be unto the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!

Reader, are you young in years? O that this solemn relation may be made useful to your soul. Remember

During this time of affliction through an evil heart of unbelief, outward trials, and powerful temptations, I sunk into a very low state of mind, and might say with the Psalmist, "I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." Ps. lxix. 2. Tried believer, you know that this expresses *much*! There was something of the terrors of the law in it. I felt what it was to be sharply handled by conscience, wrath, and law, and the enemy followed me with those words: "Died Abner as a fool dieth!"

Thus, I was in a very hot furnace, and the Lord humbled and brought me very low. I cried to him day and night, and betook myself to the word of God. I had proved that what the Lord says there of man in his natural estate, is true,—I could set my seal to the Scripture doctrine of the fall of man,—that I had, according to the word, been solemnly convinced of sin; that I was a sinner in chief, vile and worthless, full of evil. I felt my great need of sovereign mercy: and had no hope and no trust but in Christ,—his blood, as shed for me,—his righteousness, as wrought for me,—and the free and absolute promise of eternal life in Christ, as being made to the chief of sinners.

I durst as soon thrust my hand into the fire as nurse my fears any longer. I was led to cast myself in a state of entire dependence upon Christ, and felt what is expressed in the language of Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

I lay once more as a broken down sinner at the footstool of mercy, and appeared in my own eyes worse than the fallen spirits.

At this crisis, the Lord sent me these words: "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." Ps. cxviii. 17. And they were followed by this Scripture: "I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies." Zech. i. 16.

These words seemed too great for me : at last the gracious Lord, in a way that I could not withstand, and as if to overwhelm me with his mercy, sent the following words with such *sweet power* as fully and blessedly delivered me ! “ For a small moment have I forsaken thee ; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me : for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth ; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted.” Isa. liv. 7—11.

I had indeed sweet peace, and was entirely delivered from all my fears, and strengthened to go on my way. It is not the lot of every Christian to endure, as I have had to do, the censures of fellow-Christians and ministers, backed by the violent temptations of Satan.

I recovered from this illness, after having been laid up for eight or nine weeks ; but for months, and even years at intervals, suffered from expectoration of blood, and occasionally was disabled for some weeks at a time from preaching.

My dear wife’s grief for the loss of her eldest and much loved son, had (as has already been stated) affected her health, and brought on a state of nervous mental excitement, which so disturbed her natural steady, good judgment, that she was led to indulge in many unusual predilections and prejudices ; amongst others, was an unreasonable and strange dislike taken

She went to reside in the middle of the winter, and entreat me to leave that place and return to Wolverhampton. It was with a warm heart against this idea, opposition only strengthened it. The journey would be further from my own views and inclinations.

It happened somewhat singularly, that without any previous communication with me, my friends of the Church of England at Wolverhampton, having heard of my recent illness and silence for so many weeks, generously sent me by the hand of a friend a present of *fourteen pounds*. This liberality placed me in a position of some embarrassment. I scrupled to accept the bounty of my friends, as I was not in actual need of it; on the other hand, to return it would have wounded them, so, avoiding these difficulties by a middle path, I voluntarily offered, as an *acknowledgment* of their kindness, to pay them a friendly visit, and to serve them *personally* for four Sabbaths.

Nothing more was *intended* on my part, nor understood on theirs, but my wife looked upon the circumstance very differently: she did not hesitate to say, that the Lord was thus answering her prayers, to return to Wolverhampton. She certainly was warmly attached to many friends there, but the idea of returning, I firmly and steadily opposed.

Meanwhile new and unforeseen trials were close at hand.

Shortly before the time fixed for my visit to Wolverhampton, a contagious fever broke out at Lakenheath; amongst others it attacked Mr. John Smith, (already mentioned as one of my warmest friends,) and in a few days carried him off.

His death-bed was *gloriously triumphant*; such indeed as I had never before seen. On the day preceding it, he sent for me,—his soul was then completely

at liberty,—he spoke with joy of his approaching dissolution, and his countenance shone as he lay upon his bed.

As soon as he saw me, he exclaimed, “*He is come. My most blessed Lord is come.* He broke in upon my soul early this morning. He rode upon a cherub and did fly, yea he did fly on the wings of the wind! O precious Lord, that ever thou shouldest look in upon, and save such a wretch.”

Then causing his whole family to be summoned to his bedside, he addressed each member of his household in turn, faithfully, and affectionately, and so took his leave of them.

He spoke to many of his friends who were present, sent his love and farewell to others, and charged the people to *behave well to me.*

Then summing up his last words with great solemnity and earnestness, he said, “I shall soon die; but I am no more afraid of death, than of my night-cap! Yes, I shall soon be in glory, as surely as this hand is lifted up.” As he said this, he raised his right arm. He lay in *raptures* for many hours, and expired the next morning.

I was now visited with breach upon breach. His brother Francis (also a very dear and faithful friend), who had been sitting alone for some time beside the *corpse* of his brother, expired within five days after, of the *same fever.*

He was a man, as has been already said, of a *vital*, though not of a strong faith; sometimes raised to hope, but oftener depressed by fears and doubts, respecting his interest in Christ; yet he was a man of a *tender conscience*, and upright mind, and who feared God greatly; and to judge from his conduct and conversation, he was a *rare* Christian.

He had hope in his death. His loss was severely and generally felt. The little church at Lakenheath,

principles of strict communion, it was necessary that I, having openly avowed those of open communion, should explain that during my stay with them I did not intend to interfere with their own rules, and I wrote and sent a letter to the deacons to say so.

Meanwhile, before I had formed the decision to return there, and during my month's visit at Wolverhampton, several of the congregation had, of their own accord, drawn up an address to the deacons and the church generally, earnestly requesting them to invite me back again to be their pastor. This address was signed by nearly all the hearers in the place; but there was a violent opposition to it on the part of a leading person, a deacon, who had the chief power in the management of the church affairs; and the subject of *strict communion* furnished him with a ready handle to overthrow an address so numerous signed. A church meeting was summoned, and an invitation sent to me to attend. This deacon first put it to the church whether they were for continuing to be a strict Baptist church or not. Most of them voted for the affirmative. He then, although aware of the pledge which I had given, refused to put the question of my being invited to be pastor, saying, that I was an advocate for open communion, and therefore ineligible; and then in a speech of about *two hours*, made a *violent attack* upon me before the church.

I endured it without *a word*, but I was so wounded, that on several of the friends proposing to me immediately after the meeting to rid themselves of the rule of the deacon who was in power, by opening another chapel, I at once assented.

Had there been an opportunity for *reflection*, I believe I should have preferred leaving them in the spirit of the text, Luke xiii. 33,—“I must walk to-day and to-morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of (*outside of*)

Jerusalem." But in this case there was no time; for before nine o'clock the next morning the friends had *procured* a good chapel at a trifling cost, with immediate possession; a committee of seven was formed to make the needful arrangements, and I was engaged to serve them as pastor for a twelvemonth.

CHAPTER XXV.

[1839-40.]

WOLVERHAMPTON—FAMILY ARRIVE 23D MARCH, 1839—IS KEPT IN
 THE LORD IN SUPPLICATION—STRIKING MANIFESTATION DURING
 FOURTEEN DAYS—WIFE'S MALADY INCREASES—SHE GOES BACK TO
 LAKENHEATH—IS ULTIMATELY QUITE RESTORED—ELDEST DAUGHTER
 SINKING IN DECLINE—OWN HEALTH SHATTERED—WHISPERERS
 RATES CHIEF FRIEND—MORBID STATE OF MIND LEADS TO BACK-
 GRADE STEP—YEAR'S ENGAGEMENT TERMINATES—CONSIDERS WIFE
 ENDED AT WOLVERHAMPTON—IS INVITED TO LEICESTER.

THERE are moments in our life's history when we are hurried on as by an unseen hand, in a course which is directly opposed to the calm and sober dictates of our *deliberate judgment*. Thus I believe it was with me in this case.

I went back to Lakenheath, took my leave of my friends there, having been with them but nine months, and returned to Wolverhampton, where I opened a new chapel in Temple-street, on the 17th February, 1839, and on that occasion preached from Isa. xxvi. 2,—“Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.”

There was from the first a good congregation at Wolverhampton, and many of the friends, according to their own testimony, heard well.

It was arranged that the same salary as before should continue to be paid to me. My family left Lakenheath for Wolverhampton on the 23rd March, 1839, and were located in a comfortable dwelling in the Stafford-road.

The whole of this matter—my return to Wolverhampton, and opening a chapel there, was brought about in the short space of nine months, by sudden and unforeseen circumstances. I do think there was an overruling hand in it all, because it was so contrary to my own will and inclinations; yet it seemed as if it must be, whether I would or not. I am therefore obliged to leave it with Him, whose ways are in the great deep, and whose footsteps are not known.

For most of those who remained at John-street chapel, I felt no lack of charity; there were one or two of them only, whose conduct had completely alienated me. At Temple-street, I steadfastly tried to *mind my own work* and congregation, and to avoid meddling with others.

During this year I had both consolations and trials. In temporal things, the hand of the Lord was graciously extended towards us, supplying *all* our needs; and in spirituals, my soul was favoured also, for whether in the light or in darkness, GOD *drew me*, and *kept me near to Him* in supplication.

On one occasion, while I was walking on the Stafford-road, and engaged, as was then my frequent practice, in self-examination, meditation, and prayer, I was favoured with a *signal mercy*—the richest of that year. The Lord was pleased to grant me a powerful revelation by faith, of Himself as *crucified for me*.

During *two hours*, I had a most blessed view of my Saviour as suffering in the garden and on the cross *for me*. This was to my soul a most *solemn* and sweet *manifestation*; and what rendered it to me a very remarkable one was, that it was repeated on the same road for an hour, or an hour and half, *every morning for fourteen days*, successively, with the intermission only of the Sabbaths.

These discoveries rendered that a hallowed place to

me, a kind of Mount Olivet, whither I often afterwards repaired to find, if it were possible, the same *blessed manifestations*. I had never before been favoured with so sweet and *glorious* a view of the dear Lord's sufferings, which dissolved my soul before his cross, and I have never been so indulged since.

Strong consolations, however, I had already proved to be the sure harbingers of great trials.

The fulfilment of my dear wife's anxious desire of returning to reside at Wolverhampton, had *not* mended her state of mind or body. She continued under the same nervous excitement, which exhibited itself in depression of spirits and unusual strangeness of manner; and her medical attendant said that her health was breaking up. Under his care it improved during the first few weeks at Wolverhampton, but very soon she again importuned me for a *change*, and begged to be allowed to go *back* to Lakenheath. Remonstrance was vain, and she left, taking with her our youngest child. In about three weeks her health was so much restored, that she returned quite an altered person, and *wholly free* from that nervous excitement, which *never* again appeared.

My eldest daughter was now evidently sinking into a decline—she was in great solicitude about her soul, and much of my time was devoted to her instruction, reading the Word to her, and praying with and for her. I was at this period *well weighted* in every sense. My *own health* was often shaken, and I was weakened with expectoration of blood, and occasional illness, which I had previously had in the same town.

Moreover, I had lived to see the fulfilment of the warning, that a "Whisperer separateth chief friends." My great friend at Manchester, a strict Baptist, was *estranged* from me by my adoption of open communions.

varied and heavy trials brought me very

low, and my soul was much cast down; and I am fully persuaded, that under the pressure of spirit resulting from such a complication of trial, my conscience had become *so tender* as to amount to *weakness of mind*.

In this state, while one day reading the Scriptures, I came to these words, 1 Cor. xi. 2,—“Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I have delivered them to you.” Thinking that by ordinances, Paul meant baptism and the Lord’s Supper, I instantly became much distressed, and went to a throne of grace, beseeching the Lord to grant me some words by which I might be directed to what was right before Him concerning *ordinances*. The word “return,” occurred to my thoughts, and I caught at it (thinking it came from God), and from that time, I fully meant never again to do as I had done at Ely.

It was at this moment that, intending to confirm my decision, I wrote a letter to my friend at Manchester, which, so far from conciliating, as I had intended, brought me into no small trouble.

Having, however, decided to return back to the practice of the strict Baptists, I expected to find great peace and consolation, but I was disappointed; the Lord made no difference with me. I have learnt by painful experience that it is not always safe to be governed by impressions, especially when those impressions are neither *deep*, nor of a *clear* character. I have often thought I erred here, but certainly not wilfully. It is my mercy to have a God whose compassions are infinite, who discerns between *wilfulness* and *weakness*, and condescends to pity the infirmities of his children, knowing their burdens, and understanding their groanings. “He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.” Job xii. 5.

And who knows, save those who have *experienced* it, what it is to stand against the opinion of so many brethren?

About two years later, I was led to the re-examination of the passage at which I stumbled, and thence to the real signification of the word "ordinances," as set forth in the marginal reading of the verse, and confirmed by the context of the whole chapter. I discovered my error, and deliberately retracted it: this happened while I was supplying the chapel in Gower-street, London, and will be related in its proper place.

As the end of my term at Temple-street approached, I decided not to renew my engagement there: and I began to plead with my God that He would once more remove me: that He would lay it upon the minds of a people who were destitute of a pastor, to invite me for a few weeks, and to cause *that* to be a *final settlement* for me. My reason for seeking this removal, was, amongst others, the conviction that *my work at Waterhampton was ended*.

These prayers appeared fulfilled to the letter. At the expiration of my year, a part of the congregation of the late Mr. Harby, of Leicester, invited me to fill his pulpit for a month, and afterwards extended their engagement to a year.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *of the Falmouth.*

Waterhampton, June 1839.

My silence has not been owing to want of friendship, nor to the want of a powerful remembrance of your past kindness, but I have been like a mariner in a long and dreadful storm. I have been incapable of writing anything which I thought might be profitable or pleasant to you. Peace be with you, and love with truth, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

You have been surprised perhaps at our *moving* about from one place to another,—so have I,—but still it has been so. I have sometimes been pleased and *comforted* under these words: “Many shall *run to and fro*, and *knowledge shall be increased*.”

Amongst other portions, those words lay much upon my mind when I *first set out*, but I did not see the *meaning* of them until time, and painful experience, interpreted them.

One principal reason why I left W——, to go to L——, was, that I was tired of unprofitable wars and fightings, and longed in the wilderness for a lodging-place of way-faring men. But THERE I met with what it has always been my lot to find,—plenty of opposition. *There*, where my heart was *most set of any place in this world*, I thought some would have broken my heart!

I believe THAT trouble had no small hand in bringing on that affliction, which I think will by-and-by bring me to my grave.

. . . . I hope my poor dear wife will return from Lakenheath better; for *this exceeds* all the calamities I have ever met with; and I have had my share.

. . . . I do not know if I am a right judge of my own present frame of spirit, if I am, I never was so effectually *weaned* from every human bosom as I am now; and very seldom has my *love* to Christ been drawn *after Him*, as it is at the present time. Within these few days, O how has my soul longed to be permitted to “weep o’er his pierced hands and feet, and view his wounded side.”

Mine has always been a base, idolatrous heart, but still, I have affections that *none but Christ can ever have*; if *He* refuses them, they will never find another object to rest upon; the *new creature’s* love cannot settle upon corruption! Truly the language of my soul is,—Give me Christ, or else I die! My love is set upon Him, but I do not, and cannot at present experience his love to me. I believe that I love Him, and I know that none can love Him who are not *first loved by Him*.

Being in the dark, I would fain live by *faith*; and I am

not without a little hope, but I want to *taste once more*. I am jealous of my heart,—I came in at the south gate, and I am afraid that I shall have to go out at the north gate. I have, I think, as many troubles as any man in England, but the greatest trouble is the hiding of the sweet face of my Redeemer! With *his manifested presence*, I could meet anything, but without *Him*, I am the biggest coward that ever essayed to carry a sword.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, to a Friend.

1839.

. In obedience to the precept of Christ, I have tried to be reconciled to my brother, whom I *never sought to offend*. Perhaps in the wonderful mercy of God, the blessing may yet come “upon the top of the head of him who was SEPARATED from his *brethren*.”

Deluded or not deluded, I think I should not have had those words so often as I have for many years had them upon my heart, if the Lord had not meant to *fulfil them*.

. As for Christ, He is at this moment the one precious jewel of my heart,—*all* that I have left, after the wreck! As I lack words to express the sight and sense I have of my own abominations, so I want words to express how strongly my love is now drawn out to Christ. Within the last few minutes those words of Erskine have been again applied: “Thy husband saves by *fire*.” Bless his holy name, *He* shall save my soul in his *own way*. I wish nothing spared, save my soul, and *his own work* in me.

“Like a refiner shall he sit,
And tread the refuse with his feet.”

Before God I do not take the ground of self-justification,—I cannot ;—I have too often stood like Joshua, in filthy garments before the Angel, closely resisted by my fierce accuser. Yet often have these words been applied with *divine power* to my heart: “Is not this a brand plucked from”

I often think that the day of my *deliverance* will be the day of my death. God many years since gave me this promise,—that *He* would bring forth my righteousness as the light, and my judgment as the noonday! If He do not perform *that promise* for me in my life time, perhaps He will do it *after* my *decease*,—before my *surviving brethren*; but if He does it not then, I am persuaded He will do it at the *judgment*. I do not fear committing my cause into *his hands*. . . .

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, to a *Friend*.

Wolverhampton, January 1840.

I WAS very glad to receive a letter from you, for I have for a length of time had to suffer a kind of dearth in the way of correspondence; having written to many, without receiving any answer, I had begun to think I had better put up my pen and wait for a more social time.

In Christian friendship I meet both with winter and summer, and the winters are so long as sometimes to make me afraid I shall never live to see a more genial season. *O Christian love!* whither art thou fled? I felt thankful on reading your letter to find that love to the brethren is not quite extinct. For your truly great kindness I desire to feel very grateful.

I was very sorry that my Lakenheath friends should take offence at my leaving, when to me, everything seemed to say, "Go." In leaving, I was concerned to know and do the *will* of God, and I was led to *consider their interest* as well as my *own*. I could not have stayed. And with a family like mine, I have often had to be very *quick* in my movements, or we should inevitably have been down low. You say in your letter, you expect I shall be in tribulation; truly it is a long time since I was out of it.

I am sorry to inform you that my dear Elizabeth, to all appearance, is in the *last stage* of *consumption*. She is



1. The first part of the document is a list of names and dates, arranged in a table-like format. The names are written in a cursive script, and the dates are in a more formal, printed style. The list appears to be a record of some kind, possibly a family tree or a list of events.

2. The second part of the document is a series of paragraphs, each beginning with a date. The text is written in a cursive script, and the dates are in a more formal, printed style. The paragraphs appear to be a narrative or a series of events, possibly a family history or a record of a business.

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I have been privileged with," but ah, friend, if you had *my trials* on the *back* of those evidences, you would seem to be very little nearer the mark! I have to wade through seas and storms, and prove the truth of good old Erskine's words: "Thy husband saves by *fire*."

I often have the *heartache*, I can assure you, still I am permitted to hope in his mercy, and what a mercy *that is*!

. The good Lord holds us on, and I have a hope that the barrel of meal shall not waste, nor the cruse of oil fail, until God sends rain on the earth. "He has engaged by firm decree, That as my days my strength shall be." My bodily health seems somewhat improved since I came this way, yet my old tabernacle is but a piece of brittle ware.

. I look upon London as being the sink of the whole world; it must be *grace indeed* that keeps the feet of a *youth* in London. *There*, a righteous man is like Lot in Sodom. May *He* who keeps the feet of his saints, *keep you*. Remember, that a *fall* would break all your bones, grieve your godly parents and friends, and perhaps send you *halting to your grave*.

Trust not for a moment, if you can help it, in your own strength; trust in no arm of flesh, be exceedingly *careful with whom you associate*, and spend as much of your time in *secret devotion* as you can.

God in Christ is the *best company*, and He *may* be found in London. He once found *me there*, and sweetly manifested his *rich mercy* to my poor soul in Leadenhall-street. Blessed be his holy name!

The Devil likes to throw down those who are coming to Christ; he will throw *you down* if he can; he watches all opportunities, and seizes the soul when off its guard. In your place, and in your business, everything makes *against holy seriousness*. Remember, my son, that laughter cannot fill the immortal mind. Pray for a *holy seriousness of heart*, and gravity of spirit. Take a fool's advice in this, lest, like me, you should have to learn these things in the sharp school of adversity. You and I are naturally much of a temper in these things. Lightness of

spirit has been a great snare to my soul, and I have had a smarting rod for it.

You are seeking Christ and his salvation. Blessed be God, these are both freely bestowed upon the most unworthy. Endeavour to pray without ceasing; lift up a short ejaculation to God for what you feel you need; follow after a *praying spirit*. "To praying souls he always grants more than they can express." Fervent prayer finds a remedy for all the evils of life. Faith in prayer is the Christian's best weapon; when you go to God, endeavour to *expect something*,—*doubting* takes off the edge of prayer, and blunts your sword. Aim at *strict circumspection* in your *conduct*, and even in your *thoughts*. An evil thought *indulged* may grieve the Holy Spirit, cause the heavens for a season to grow darker, and give the enemy an advantage over you.

Never think yourself safe, until you can *find the Lord*, nor even then, only as led to trust in Him, and keep to his company; an honest tender conscience will be for your soul's health. Jesus loves the society and honest prattle of young believers. He will not say you *no*. God helping me, I will pray for you, that you may be kept from the filthy conversation of the wicked.

Yours in great love,

EDWARD BLACKSTOCK.

●
CHAPTER XXVI.

[1840.]

WOLVERHAMPTON—DEATH OF DAUGHTER ELIZABETH—LETTERS FROM
BOTH PARENTS TO FRIENDS, ON HER ILLNESS AND LAST DAYS.

A FEW weeks before our removal from Wolverhampton my dear daughter Elizabeth, after receiving a most precious manifestation of the Lord's loving-kindness to her soul, had departed this life when nearly twenty years of age.

Thus, my gracious Lord was still blasting my gourds and laying me low, for I felt the loss of her exceedingly! Her remains lie in St. George's churchyard, Wolverhampton.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend, on the Death of his
Daughter Elizabeth.*

1840.

ACCORDING to my promise I will now try to give you some account of the last days of my dearly beloved and much lamented Elizabeth. Your kindness will overlook all faults in the narration.

I think she had been *much concerned* about her soul for at least *three* years before her decease; that concern was deeper and heavier at one time than another, but her general carriage then appeared *unusually sedate*. We never knew her to have an intimate friend, or companion, excepting her brother Henry, for whom she showed a *great regard*. .

When she appeared in good health, I often thought she was not fitted for a long life in this world. Some years before she was taken away, I had these words laid upon my mind—"I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and surname himself by the name of Israel." For many years past, when at a throne of grace, my children have lain *very near* me.

About three years before my dear Elizabeth's departure, she was taken alarmingly ill; I was then much concerned about her soul, and was led to betake myself to God in prayer for her, and had a time of such life, *enlargement*, *power*, and sweetness, as raised in me a *confident hope* that the Lord would *call her by his grace*, and prove her to be *one* of his. That evening, when about to retire to rest, she as usual took her leave of me: my feelings being much excited, I could not forbear stating what I believed concerning her. She burst into tears, and appeared *so much affected*, that I was convinced she was under no small anxiety about her soul. After this she had several fits of illness, and finally an attack of influenza, from the effects of which she never quite recovered. I then began to look upon her as a very delicate plant.

A few weeks after we had all arrived at Lakenheath, she was one evening suddenly seized with palpitation of the heart, &c. Her distress about her soul was then *very great*, and as she was led to cry to God in prayer for mercy and salvation, these words suddenly fell upon her mind—"Though it tarry, wait for it." She at first thought the words were *not* in the Bible (Hab. ii. 3), and immediately sunk in despondency and fears. But this scripture came—"Be not faithless, but believing," John xx. 27, at which she wondered! Soon after she had these words—"As a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering fence," Ps. lxii. 3.

From *that* period, she considered her days in this world were numbered! At another time—when in great afflic-

tion of body and soul, and being inclined to a murmuring spirit—these words were applied: “Despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him,” Heb. xii. 1. Also—“I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not,” Jer. xxxiii. 3. And again, when in great trouble about her soul, this scripture was sent—“Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river,” Isa. lxvi. 12. And about three or four weeks before her death, she was favoured with these words—“My salvation is near to come, and my glory to be revealed,” Isa. lvi. 1. (The scripture reads—My righteousness to be revealed, but she told me she had them as I have set them down.)

For many months before she died, I was under the deepest concern about her soul, and suffered more than pen can express, or tongue utter. These words were laid upon my mind *very weightily*—“Travail as in birth.” The soul pangs I have endured for her are unutterable! known to God, and to Him alone.

I used to spend most of my time with her, reading and expounding and praying with, or for her. Times that I cannot number, I have examined her with the greatest care, as to the state of her mind, her prospects, her feelings, her fears, and her hopes; I always left off with this conclusion, that the *good work was certainly begun*.

She was—contrary to her natural disposition—very free to tell me the secrets of her soul; yet, to the best of my knowledge, I never saw one more cautious or careful to speak the truth, and to utter no more than she had *felt*. Though she knew and believed the doctrines of grace, she was remarkably suspicious of *head-knowledge*, and was exceedingly anxious for a *feeling religion*, often declaring that she could believe no more for herself than she had *felt*.

She appeared to have passed under a severe cutting law-work, and to have a surprisingly deep acquaintance with the *badness* of her own heart. I never saw any one wade through greater sorrow, or more distressing fears from the apprehension which she at times entertained of having

committed the sin unpardonable ; it often drove her on the borders of despair. There appeared to be in her a thorough renunciation of creature-righteousness, creature-holiness, duty-faith, duty-works, and duty-repentance. I think I never saw a sinner more completely *broken down* than she seemed.

When I have questioned her as to the matter of her prayers—as I sometimes did—her answers have astonished me ; I could not have told her how to ask for anything better than she was led to ask for herself. I have heard her cry to the Lord in a manner truly affecting—“God be merciful to me a sinner,”—“O, bid a poor expiring Gentile live!” &c. And then she would ejaculate—“Assure my conscience of her part in the Redeemer’s blood, and bear thy witness with my heart that I am born of God.”

For some months before she died, she solemnly declared that all her trust was in Christ, and she at times would say, that she had *some hope* in Him. This hope she prized, but she longed to be *assured* of her interest in Him. When her fears increased much, she said she did not doubt Christ’s *ability*, but feared that He might be *unwilling* to save her, yet she endeavoured to cast herself at his feet.

Many of Dr. Watts’s and the Olney Hymns were much esteemed by her,—they described her desires, longings, and feelings. I tried her with several of them, and she would tell me exactly *how far* she would go with them. These two Olney hymns I remember particularly—“O Lord, how vile am I,”—and—“Does the Gospel word proclaim?” To these she would set her seal. She frequently said she longed for *holiness*, as well as for pardon, and that heaven would be no heaven to her, without she were *made holy*.

To the best of my knowledge she was raised to hope in Christ some months previous to her death ; and appeared to be not without life, light, comfort and peace, though occasionally sunk in fears and sorrows.

I thought that God did make several of his graces shine upon her. She only wanted *one manifestation* of the *love* of Christ, declaring that if she had *that*, she was ready

to bid the world adieu! Like Simeon, she waited for the consolation of Israel.

In this state of mind, and in dying circumstances, I had to leave her to come to Leicester; no one can imagine what I suffered. Parting with my dying child—it was the greatest trial in my life's history. And sure I am that *her* feelings were not less acute than mine; love and sorrow had riveted us together, and we mutually feared we should see each other no more in this world.

On the Monday following I received a letter from my wife, of which I send you an extract. Speaking of our dear Elizabeth, she says—"This morning she broke out into a rapture of soul, threw her arms out of bed, and exclaimed, 'Yes, I trust to Jesus Christ—I trust to Jesus Christ!—I *know* I shall be *happy*—I *am* *happy*! Mother—O, tell my father I have a good hope; and I *know* I am not deceiving you—yes—I have a good hope. O how precious Christ is to me!—Come, Lord Jesus, *now*—now receive my spirit!'"

Her mother says, "I endeavoured to pour out my spirit in prayer and thanksgiving to God. When I had ended, with great energy she said—'Amen! amen! Now, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'

"Then she would have all the children brought up to her, and affectionately and faithfully warned them of their danger, and charged them to read their Bible. She kissed them, and took her leave of them; then again repeated, 'Be sure, mother, you tell my father I have got a *good hope*.—Yes—I shall see Jesus as He is—yes—I—shall soon launch away, and be with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and my *dear brother* Henry!

"O what a wonder—O what a wonder!—I shall see Him (Jesus) *as He is*—I seem as if I were *in heaven now*—O how soft my dying-bed is!—O, for ten thousand tongues!' (To her mother and the friends present she said)—'All praise Him—all praise Him!'

"Many such expressions as these she uttered whilst the joys of heaven appeared on her countenance."

In this way, says her mother, she lay for hours, and

at length fell asleep, apparently from mere exhaustion. Hitherto not a single wandering of mind had been observed. But the surgeon (a skilful man) had assured her mother that delirium would ensue, and had sent a strong opiate, which we forbore to administer.

I reached home about 4 o'clock, P.M., on the Wednesday after. She was almost gone, yet she knew me, and showed satisfaction on seeing me once more. She had been delirious, and had *raved much about me*, but when I entered the room she was quite herself. Her joyous frame had subsided, but she expressed hope and peace, and told me that she felt *Christ precious*.

I sat up alone with her that night, and I think I shall never forget it! What appeared to me strong delirium came on, but she weathered through until the next evening, when she expired — February 27, 1840, aged nineteen.

Her mortal remains lie in St. George's churchyard, Wolverhampton.

A few days before her death she earnestly requested her mother and me to give her kind love to you, and Mrs. Hagger, your dear mother.

Thus, my dear friend, I have endeavoured to relate something of the fears and hopes of my beloved child, and may Jesus, by his gracious presence, heal the wounds He has made in my heart by her removal.

In great esteem and warm Christian love,

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend, on the Death of her Daughter Elizabeth.*

Leicester, March 1840.

. At the moment I received your kind letter I was putting on my mourning attire to attend the funeral of my dearly beloved Elizabeth, who departed this life on Thursday night, the 27th of February, and was interred on Tuesday, the 3d of March, in St. George's Church, Wolverhampton.

Dear child, had she lived until the 1st of March, (the day on which you wrote your letter,) she would have attained her twentieth year. But it pleased the Lord to take her unto himself. And although I feel the stroke acutely, yet my soul desires to bend in submission to his will, knowing that the Judge of all the earth *cannot do what is right*. And again I would adore Him in this exercise of his sovereign pleasure, because He has been graciously pleased to grant unto us a lively, well-grounded hope that *our loss is her eternal gain*.

And this hope which we have does not arise from sentimental affection. No, we had the unspeakable consolation of seeing the Lord gradually call her by his grace to a deep acquaintance of her lost estate by nature. And not only so, but how often have we heard her mourn over the *hidden evils* of her own heart, in a way which has once astonished and gratified us, because we know *these* the *teachings* of the *Holy Spirit*, whereby He brings children of God to self-renunciation, and constrains them, under a feeling sense of their own sinfulness, to seek for refuge unto the bleeding wounds of a crucified Redeemer.

Such was the happy lot of my dear departed child; and although for some months her feeble faith was encumbered with many doubts and fears, as to the willingness of Christ to save her, yet, blessed be his name, He was graciously pleased gently to *draw her soul in ardent desires for Him*, whilst He *applied* sweet portions of his word with *power* to her soul. The following are a few:—“Although the vision tarry, wait for it;”—“Be not faithless, O believing:” and at another memorable time, these words,—“Behold I will extend peace to her like a river.” And for ever adored be his name, he *made his words* *fulfilled*.

On the Monday morning before she died, she was enabled to lay hold on eternal life in such a soul-satisfying way! and to tell us, with joy beaming in her countenance, that she trusted to Jesus Christ alone, and *knew* she should be happy. “Yes,” she repeated, “I trust

to Jesus Christ alone—I *know* I shall be happy,”—“I shall *see Him as He is*,”—“I shall see Him as He is,”—“O how good the Lord is to me,”—“How gently He deals with me,”—“How soft my dying bed is,”—“O what a wonder,”—“Praise Him,”—“*all praise Him*,”—“I shall soon launch away, and be with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, and with my dear brother Henry,”—“O how *good the Lord is to me*.”

I felt so overcome with this *kind manifestation* of the love of God to my dear child, that I sunk down by her bedside, and endeavoured to pour out my soul in thanksgiving to Him, for such a rich display of his undeserved mercy. I besought Him, that when He saw good to take her immortal spirit out of the body, He would be pleased to send some kind angel to convey it safely to his throne. To this my dear child with great energy responded,—“Amen—Amen—Come, Lord Jesus—Now—Now—receive my spirit!!”

All these ejaculations were uttered with such pathos as I cannot describe, and for some hours that forenoon she lay blessing and praising God for his goodness to her soul, and telling me to be sure to tell her dear father (who was then at Leicester), that she had a *good hope* in Jesus Christ, and *knew* she should be happy.

After this she sunk from exhaustion into a sweet slumber for several hours; when she awoke I had just received a letter from my dear husband, the principal part of which was addressed to her; I felt afraid to read it, lest it should awaken her sensibilities, and excite her. Yet I durst not keep it back, because it was replete with Scriptural consolation and instruction.

I gently told her—she appeared *disappointed*, rubbed her dear forehead, and seemed confused, saying: “I thought my dear father would have come to see me, but *instead of my father*, here is a *letter*.”

From that time, she roamed about her dear father,—kept listening to hear his footsteps,—watching the chamber door, and saying, “*My dear father*,” till the words died on her lips! Then she would begin again about her *dear*

ther, and twice or thrice said, "Dear Lord, *spare me until I see my dear father.*"

From that time she had very few lucid intervals. Yet she was spared to see her dear father, and *knew him*. But her delirium increased, until the Lord saw good to release her captive spirit, and take it to eternal glory.

I cannot tell you in the compass of a letter, how many were the opportunities which we had during her long illness, of witnessing the *fruits* of God's Spirit brought forth by her experience, conversation, and deportment; but they were strikingly manifest to us all.

And though it pleased an Heavenly Father to suffer His Son to forsake the helm for a little time before her dissolution, yet, blessed be his name, that does not shake our confidence in *Christ*. No, He has taught us to distinguish between the natural effects of a bodily disease, and *spiritual work* wrought in the soul. When nature is about to give up her functions, sometimes one faculty fails first, and sometimes another. Now in the case of my beloved Henry, we were sure that his reason was wide awake to the last. Not so with my beloved Elizabeth; her sight and reason seemed to give up first. Such was the will of God, and my soul desires to say, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth keep silence." Yes, my dear friend, it is indeed the frame of my spirit at this moment to say with holy Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

During the time of my child's sojourn on earth, it was our lot always to dwell under our roof, excepting now and then, when we allowed her to pay a short visit to friends whom we approved of. We had therefore the opportunity of watching over her from the *cradle* to the *grave*. And though a strong affection might induce me to overlook the natural imperfections and foibles which cleave to human nature, yet after the strictest scrutiny, I am forced to say, that, through the restraining grace of God, she was an ornament to my declining years for filial affection, discretion, and modesty.

But, what is infinitely more than all that, in the last

twelve months of her life she was made, *through* *vincible grace of God*, to disclaim all self-righteous principles ; and constrained to cast herself upon *God in as a sinner in chief*. Her ejaculations often were, ‘ he would bid a poor expiring Gentile live ! ’

“ Dear Lord, assure my conscience of her part
In the Redeemer’s blood,
And bear thy witness with my heart,
That I am born of God.”

Thus I have given you a very short account of my loved child, and I pray God that I may have *grace* to bear up under my loss in a way becoming a *Christian mother*.

MARIA BLACKSTOCK

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend*.

Leicester, March

. . . . My health has seemed gradually to improve. I left Lakenheath, but I *never* expect to be *strong*. I have at times much beating and confusion in my mind, though I abstain from everything that I think improper.

On the 27th February, 1840, died my dear Elizabeth, but I hope her soul is gone to endless rest. She had been declining for three years, yet it was a *great stroke* to her last.

Whilst at W——, she had the influenza, which left behind it a pain whenever she took a long breath, and was the foundation for what followed, viz. heart-disease, enlarged liver, cough, consumption of the lungs, and anasarca or dropsical symptoms. I propose in a few days to write to Miss ——, and giving her a more particular account of my dear girl. My wife and the rest of the children were at home on Sabbath-day, and are at present at Wolverhampton. Joseph is with Mr. ——; he has a good situation and is very well off; the rest (seven) are at present at home.

At one time when I was at Potton, I used sec

wish that I might be *more tempted*, to enable me to speak better to the cases of the Lord's tempted people. And I remember once earnestly praying, that rather than the Lord would leave me in a *lukewarm* state, he would drag me through a thousand hells of *trouble* ! Since then, I have not gone short of trial, temptations, or troubles ; they have often seemed as if they would overwhelm me.

Much of the little business I have done with heaven of late years, has been done in deep waters. I think I should be *loth* to *pray* for temptations or troubles *again*. It is best to lie at the footstool of mercy, entirely at the Divine disposal. Carving for one's self is a dangerous business. O, to be favoured to know his will, and to be, do, and suffer, according to his sovereign pleasure. O, for grace to trust in him, whose wisdom cannot err, and whose mercy never fails. I never did so deeply feel my *need* of him as now. Blessed indeed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. I have been a poor fretful creature, and get no better. O Lord, thou knowest my foolishness. Folly and fretting are near companions. It is my desire that I might be favoured to enjoy more of the Lord's blessed *presence* and *company*, to chase my cares and fears ; and that whenever He sees good to hide his face from me, I might be favoured to wait humbly at his footstool, until He blesses and fills my soul with his presence, or cheers my drooping heart with his smile. And whenever He sees fit to lay upon me his smarting rod, may I be still and patient under it, for

“ Though rods and frowns are sometimes brought,
And man may change, He changes not,
His love abideth sure.”

When He has much indulged me, I have abused his kindness by living too much upon sense, not having learnt to trust Him. He will be *trusted*, as well as feared. In deep seas and heavy storms it is a great thing to *trust* in the Lord.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

CHAPTER XXVII.

LEICESTER—[1840.]

FAMILY GO TO LEICESTER 15TH APRIL, 1840—HOPES TO FIND SETTLED REST THERE—A POOR BUT LIBERAL PEOPLE—HAND OF GOD IN PROVIDENCE CONSPICUOUS—TRACES IT THROUGH PAST LIFE—RECORDS EVENTS, SHOWING GOD'S SPECIAL PROVIDENTIAL CARE THROUGHOUT.

My friends in Temple-street, Wolverhampton, offered to renew my engagement with them with an increased salary of 120*l.*, but for the reasons stated above, and also the desire to find, if possible, *settled peace* and *rest*, I declined their offer, and chose Leicester, with a small and precarious stipend, to Wolverhampton with a liberal and certain one.

For the second time we bade adieu to our kind friends at Wolverhampton, and all arrived safely at Leicester on the 15th April, 1840.

By my arrangement with the Leicester congregation, their incidental expenses (amounting to about 35*l.* per annum), were to be defrayed out of the voluntary contributions, and the seat rents, and to be the first payments out of that fund. The residue of it, whatever it might be, was to go to the support of the pastor; but as the people generally were very poor, this surplus could not exceed, on the highest probable estimate, 60*l.* in the year, an income which was but

small for the support of my numerous family. Yet at no period of my life was the hand of God in his Providence more visible than at Leicester.

During my pilgrimage his hand had been more or less conspicuously displayed towards us, times unnumbered. I will take this opportunity of giving a few instances which show that the Lord was kind to me and mine at Wolverhampton, and at Lakenheath, as He had been at other places, and as He proved at Leicester.

When I was at Wolverhampton my salary was 104*l.* a-year, and there were *twelve* of us to maintain (for my eldest son Henry was at home ill), and when rent and taxes, &c. were paid, we had each a groat a-day to live upon. We had to carry our case to the Lord, and beg for his kind interposition, and truly He never failed us.

On entering my new dwelling in that town, I was depressed by the weight of the undertaking, and was led to beg of God once more to show me that his hand was not closed against me. He answered my prayer in a most pleasant manner; for, as I was thinking that He had not as yet *attended to my petition*, I was informed of the arrival of a box, which, when opened, I found to be full of most useful wearing apparel for my wife and daughters, and a most beautifully written letter containing a sovereign, and informing me that the writer had read a printed sermon of mine, which she had so much approved, that she was induced to send me the above-mentioned present. This lady I had never seen; she lived in Nottinghamshire. I was a great deal comforted by this providence, as it proved that the hand of my God was *not closed*.

At another time, when low in purse, and wondering what we should do, a strange lady called, and asked for the sermon which I have named. She remained talking with my wife and myself in a very pleasant

manner; and then taking up the book, left a guinea in payment for it. I felt this to be a kind favour from a good God in an hour of need.

On another occasion, the same lady called at a moment when we were *quite* aground. She talked for about a quarter of an hour, and parting with us very kindly, left another guinea. We wondered much at the providence, for we neither knew her *name*, nor *where* she came from, nor how she had found us; and we never saw her after. Thus the Lord helped us twice by the hand of a stranger; she knew nothing of our necessities, nor did *any human being know* of them; but the Lord, our kind Benefactor, *knew*.

After we had been there a few months, my eldest son (not being out of his apprenticeship) came over to see us from Potton. His mother observed to me that he much needed some apparel. I replied that I could not tell where they were to come from. The next day, as I was returning from the morning service, it being Sunday, a kind friend followed me out, and telling me that he had heard well that morning, presented me with a sum of money. When I reached home, and told my wife, she exclaimed, "That will *just do* for Henry's clothes;" and to this purpose it was applied. Thus the Lord sent the sum before I had *time* or opportunity to *ask* Him.

My son Henry was a most affectionate and faithful son. I accompanied him to Birmingham. We had emptied our pockets upon him, although we gave him no more than was necessary. I saw him on the coach, and was much affected in parting with him: he had then a heart disease.

I had now but eighteen-pence left, and expected to walk most of the way back home. I had promised to call on a friend in Birmingham, and after taking some refreshment there, I rose to go. My host put something into my hand, which I supposed might be

a few shillings to pay my coach-hire, and I felt very thankful to him for it, as I was very tired; but the gift proved to be 5*l.*, a sum which more than covered the expense of my son's journeys both ways. "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness!"

There was a singular providence over my dwelling-house, No. 12, Temple Street. I had been urged to take it by a particular friend; but the rent was several pounds above what I felt warranted in venturing upon. I was led to pray frequently that the Lord would choose for me, and fix the bounds of my habitation; and from what I felt in prayer, I concluded that *this* was to be my habitation. A very kind friend accompanied me to the landlord's dwelling, and asked for the house for me. It was *refused* us by the landlord, and being unable to succeed, we finally left him. I thought it *strange*; and we had scarcely got beyond the garden gate, when a servant came and asked me to leave my friend outside, and to go in the back way, as the landlord wished to speak to me. I immediately followed, and the old gentleman at once delivered me the key of the house in question!

Within four or five weeks of the *first quarter-day*, we had not one penny towards the rent, nor *any prospect* of it. I had also a boy at school, whose quarter's bill would be due. I therefore went, day after day, to beg the Lord to appear for me, and often in *much anxiety* and trouble; but about four or five days previous to the rent-day, I received a letter from a distance containing 5*l.* With this I paid both my *rent* and my boy's *school*; and during the whole three years that I was in Temple Street, it was always thus with me. I never could *save* anything for rent out of my salary; and although I never had the money *beforehand*, (but had invariably to *beg it* of God,) yet it *always came* before the landlord called; sometimes in letters, sometimes in smaller sums from Christian

friends, but as surely as the quarter-day came, *there was the money!*

The goodness of God in this often deeply touched me, for during the last two years there were *twelve* of us to be maintained. I remember at one time requiring about five guineas for these purposes, and the children wanted many things; also, we needed blankets for the approaching winter. My dear wife often *reminded me of these wants*. Six or seven weeks before the quarter-day, I began earnestly to call upon God; I went to Him day after day; but his hand appeared *quite closed*; weeks rolled on, and no signs of *help*. At length, alas, I fell into a sulky fit; I became very rebellious, and thought it was of no use caring—that the landlord must come, and take what there was.

I then ceased to pray for temporal deliverance: the hand of God closed. He adhered to his purpose, and I rebelliously stuck to mine, until it was just upon quarter-day, and I had *not one penny* towards the object before me. I then began to think that my *goods* would be seized; that I should fall into disgrace; and—what was *worse than all*—the cause of God and truth would be *dishonoured*. This thought made me tremble with fear, and, full of distress, I again commenced earnestly to call upon God, that He would appear, and once more open his hand for me.

I was one day on the Penn Road, vehemently importuning the Lord, when these words came distinctly: “And your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things,” Luke xii. 30. This Scripture sharply *rebuked*, while at the same time there was comfort in it. It seemed to say: “What a bleating you make about a few temporal things! what a distrustful being you are!” But although I felt *shame* and *reproof*, I was comforted that God had *once more spoken to me*. I felt that I had received a sure earnest of deliverance; and I was humbled and quieted. Which way my

relief was to come, I was at a loss to conjecture; but I most firmly believed that it *would come*.

Shortly after this, a hearer called, and before we parted he said that his wife and he had had us much upon their minds, feeling sure that, with our *large family*, we *must be in need*: he presented me with 5*l.* as the gift of his wife and himself. I was very thankful both to God and to the instruments, and felt at the moment as though the name of this present was Gad—a troop cometh!—and it was so, for different gifts came in, until I had about 12*l.*—a sum more than sufficient for every purpose. Thus I had here another proof that He is faithful that hath promised; the goodness of God triumphed over my unbelieving fears.

At another time, when quarter-day was come, I had about 10*l.* due to me; and having but little in the house, I sent my wife to the treasurer, who I knew had just received the quarterly seat-rents, &c., amounting to 18*l.* He informed her that he had resigned his office as treasurer, and, after giving her a *lecture*, sent her home without a penny! There were *twelve* of us, then, *without means*. What was to be done?

We felt much tried, never in our lives having been similarly treated. We retired to our room, and united in crying unto Him who has promised to *hear* the prayer of the *destitute*. As soon as I had risen from my knees, it flashed into my mind in a moment what steps to take. I knew that our friends generally were ignorant of this manœuvre, and I resolved to try their liberality.

I felt that another treasurer must be obtained, and I applied to one of our friends for this purpose: he had promised the former treasurer that he would *not* take the office, but the Lord *softened his heart*, and he kindly said, that if his acceptance of the post would

be any *benefit to us*, he would at once undertake then drew up a case in a few words, adding my own signature; and I applied to such members and hearers, as I judged had the means of giving. They soon collected about 26*l.*, which I carried to the church with me, and left some deposit in the hands of the new treasurer. In this way, they brought me from between the horns of *that* dilemma, and once more set us upon the road. Among the friends to whom I applied, *not one refused*, all contributed *cheerfully*.

It behoved me to be thankful to God for his manifold mercies towards me, and for the very spirit with which He had endued that people. "God opens the heart, man gives free as air. The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in Him." Nah.

During many years, the manner in which He dealt with me was this,—He did not suffer us to be brought *low*, and then in the midst of destitution relieve us; we were often brought *low*, often brought within the reach of a few pence, but never once, from the time that we were called by grace, did He ever allow us actually to *feel* want.

He kept me upon my watch-tower, and taught me *closely* to observe the heavens and the opening and shutting of his hand. Before a storm came, or a trying event, *He* generally gave me intimation of it. He laid a travail upon my soul in good time, and kept me *begging* and *waiting* until the trying came, and then *He delivered us*.

The few specimens that I have here related, are nothing to the many *hundred deliverances* that God wrought for us. "They that go down to the sea in ships, and do business in great waters; they shall see the hand of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep." Ps. cvii. Few words fit my case better than the

"Now they believe his word,
Whilst rocks with rivers flow ;
Now with their lusts provoked the Lord,
And he reduced them low."

"But when they mourn'd their faults,
He hearken'd to their groans,
Brought his own covenant to his thoughts,
And call'd them still his sons."

When in answer to prayer, I have had fresh promises and fresh deliverances, I have often for a little while *believed in God* as steadily as any one ; but when in a storm the ship has sprung a leak, and been fast filling with water, my heart has often sunk and my soul has melted in me with trouble. I have within me a most odious principle of distrust, which is never still long together ; for my evil heart has no soundings.

One temptation followed me for many years, which was the fear that I should one day be brought to a state of entire destitution, as to *temporal* things ; and in my imagination I have often pictured myself and children under a *Gipsy's tent* in a wild place, and sometimes lying in a dry ditch, *there* taking my leave of a miserable and unfriendly world. This has been part of my *infirmity*, but I would remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.

I am quite convinced that no Christian knows *what his faith* is, during the time of *ease* and prosperity ; it is when *sharp temptation* and *adversity* come, that faith is *tried* and *proved*. I hardly think it would have taken much to persuade Job, that he might die upon his dunghill ; or Jeremiah, that he would perish in his dungeon ; or David, in the wilderness ; or Paul even, before the gates of Lystra ; or those precious saints of God, of whom the world was not worthy ; by men generally esteemed as outcasts and vagabonds, who wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. Under their sufferings these knew not how soon their flesh might

drop upon the face of their mother earth; to *afflicted ones*, *glory* must have been a delightful transition.

Whilst I lived in Wolverhampton, the Laker friends continued unchanged in kindness; and the Lord made use of them to assist me there. When I, with my family, removed to that place, I agreed to have no fixed salary, but to receive the proceeds of four annual afternoon collections, and what the Lord might send in addition.

There were *twelve of us* to live on the providence of God, after the *manner of the birds*. Here, I had more distrust than usual, although I had not more than 18*l.* a quarter from the church. But the Lord showed that He was the author of ways and means. I saw his hand more conspicuously displayed in this place. The hand-basket again made its appearance. He fetched in our food from far and near; and was enough, and I was going to say, to *spare*. I call this place Goshen the second.

But I had plenty to counterbalance these things; for besides *troubles in the church*, I had *exercises of mind*,—a son whose heart was becoming ossified in its general substance; a daughter in the state of incipient *consumption*; myself, through rupture of a blood vessel while at Lakenheath, laid up nine Sabbaths, and very frequently after profuse expectorating blood; so that my life appeared to hang on a thread. To be prevented preaching was my *greatest trial I ever had*.

It was at this time that the Lord most wonderfully opened his hand. Besides a few smaller sums, £100 was sent me from B——, in a letter; 26*l.* from C—— and 18*l.* from Wolverhampton. A dying friend sent me 20*l.* and a suit of mourning; so that the Lord there opened his hand in such a manner as He did before, and has never done since.

He knew what we had shortly to meet with. We had losses, sicknesses, two funerals, and two removals of the family and furniture to distant places; and when we were finally set down at Leicester, it was but a *very* little sum that remained. Yet *there* the hand of the Lord followed us,—a young lady of the place who had lately died, left me a legacy of 10*l.*; and another at a distance, one of my own *children in the Lord*, presented me with 10*l.* more.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

[1840-41.]

LEICESTER—ASSOCIATIONS—FLOCK OF LATE MR. HARDY—TRADE DEPRESSED—NINE IN FAMILY—GOD'S BOUNTY—PROMISE THAT BARREL OF MEAL NOT TO WASTE OR CRUSE OF OIL TO FAIL—TRIAL—POPULAR PREACHERS ATTRACT HIS HEARERS—NEW CHAPEL BUILT—FOREBODINGS AND ANXIETIES—COMFORTED BY HYMN—LETTERS—NEW CHAPEL OPENED—A CRISIS—ALTERNATIVE OF WANT OR REMOVAL—INVITED FOR ONE MONTH TO GOWER-STREET CHAPEL—WARM RECEPTION—TESTIMONIES OF BLESSING RECEIVED—LETTERS.

LEICESTER, with its ruined abbey and other relics of past ages, is an interesting old town to the antiquarian and traveller. Upon these ruins and the surrounding scenery, I have often gazed with admiration from my window.

To me, there were many pleasing associations connected with the spot. Mr. Hardy had lived and preached there, and among part of his congregation I was called to labour. I lived in his dwelling house, and even occupied his own easy chair. Nor were the people strange to me; I had frequently preached at two of the chapels in the town, and having *enjoyed liberty* of soul among them, I was prepossessed in their favour.

For these reasons I could have been *well content*, if it had been God's will, to have *ended* my days at Leicester.

The flock of the late Mr. Hardy had been divided,

scattered and peeled. We were all *extremely poor*, and I had scarcely raised the standard, when I was *blackened* without mercy. Yet the Lord set me steadily to work, and I felt that his kind *helping* hand was evidently with me.

We had difficulties to contend with of a temporal kind, there being *nine* of us to be supplied. The trade of Leicester was suffering depression, I therefore asked no *pledge* from the people, well knowing that in their state of poverty it was not in their power to give one; yet the *hand of God in providence* was never more singularly or beautifully displayed towards me.

When we had been there about a month, one of the leading members, though himself a poor man, brought me 8*l.*; and from this time, as surely as the fourth Monday came, my friend John appeared about noon with the *same sum*. No one could foresee from what quarter the money was to come, but to the day, it invariably came.

In all my wanderings, I have never seen anything like the bounty which God dealt out to me at Leicester. It was like *raining food from heaven!* or the outpouring of a perpetual fountain from a barren rock. We seemed to live upon miracles.

I was kept as sensibly dependent upon God as a mortal being could well be: daily and frequently I was led to a throne of grace. One time in particular, feeling that I wanted a promise applied to rest upon, the Lord graciously attended to my petition, and in an hour of need granted it. I had been pleading with Him on the Humberstone-road, which was then my daily practice, and was crossing the Belgrave-gate full of trouble, when He mercifully girded me up with this blessed promise,—“For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth

rain upon the earth." 1 Kings xvii. 14. This was precious word to me, for although a Christian is interested in all the promises, yet a promise *applied* to his soul by the Spirit in time of need, is like "apples of gold set in baskets of silver. It is a good repast which doeth good like a medicine, and maketh bones fat."

I had thus a promise to *rest upon* in an hour of trial, or to *plead* in a time of necessity: and blessed be the name of the Lord, he has hitherto been faithful to his word! There is nothing surer to rest upon than a promise of God, if it be applied by the Holy Ghost.

I had now to preach the Word at Leicester, I had often preached before, under an accumulation of burdens. I had to pray for the deliverance and keeping of my own soul; for a testimony to deliver from the pulpit; for a blessing on that testimony; for a congregation to hear and receive it, and for daily supplies for the support of my family. But the blessing of the Lord was with me, and, as I have already said, He kept me steadily to my work; if I was not surrounded with great enjoyments in the pulpit, yet I had his sustaining power there; and had I not had many weights to carry, no situation would have pleased me better.

But a new anxiety arose. There are in every congregation, more or less of hearers who are fond of constant change, and the measures employed against me, by the leaders of another chapel, were such as to stimulate this thirst for novelty. They sent far and wide, and invited able men to preach in their pulpits in succession.

This was admirably calculated to draw away our men's hearers, and not unlikely to ruin us, as our name was already cast out as evil. It was also a trial to my feelings, as I felt interested in that people.

But the conduct of these preachers themselves surprised me even more than the leaders. It certainly appeared to me a strange and unprecedented course for ministers, occupying the position of *settled* pastors over prosperous congregations, to leave their own charge, and readily go and contribute their aid to divide and weaken the congregation of a brother minister.

There were two of my own *old friends*, who I felt confident (as I told my wife) would *never* come over, nor put their hand to such a work! But they *both came*; and I proved that "it is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in princes!" The *Lord sustained me*, and helped me to go right on my way.

In the face of all these discouragements our congregation steadily increased, till the sight was cheering. The body of the chapel (excepting the galleries) was nearly full; at our quarterly collections the hearts of some were opened to assist the cause, and during the first year it was so far *prospered*, that the chapel was *repaired* and lighted with *gas*. Yet even when appearances were the most promising, I had the conviction that Satan would *hinder* me from *settling there* if he could.

A worse storm was brewing; there were in the town of Leicester six meeting-houses, in which the truth was either really or professedly preached.

A rich man began to build a *seventh*. There seemed little need of this, and little room for it to flourish; but rumour was very busy upon the subject.

The new pulpit, it was said, was to be filled by all the first preachers in the country, the proprietor was about to give a free, or *gratuitous* gospel, by defraying the whole expenses of the building and of

public worship out of his own purse; and rumour for once was *right*!

The question for *me* was—and it was one pretty generally asked in Leicester—what, in the face of this new and formidable obstacle, was to *become* of *me* and my *flock*?

I had my forebodings, as I think most persons in my position would have had. In this fresh difficulty I carried my cause and my sorrows to the throne of God, and there poured out my complaint; and I did not go in vain. After I had been so engaged one day, and was returning home full of troubles, these words of Mr. Newton were mercifully sent to strengthen me—

“ Begone, unbelief, my Saviour is near,
And for my relief will surely appear,” &c.

That hymn I call *all my own*; much of it came to my thoughts on that occasion, but the following verse more particularly; I received it with much comfort, and mingled tears of joy and grief:—

“ Why should I complain of want or distress,
Temptation, or pain; he told me no less:
The heirs of salvation, I know from his word,
Through *much tribulation must follow their Lord*.”

I was now daily led to wrestle hard with God in prayer, that He would in some way graciously appear for me, and bear me safely through the storm, which I saw gathering heavily over Leicester; and the following passage was *much* with me:—“ I saw all Israel scattered over the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd,” 1 Kings xxii. 17.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend.*

Leicester, Aug. 1840.

. . . . HITHERTO we have gone on peaceably in Leicester. If I might have fair play here, there is the prospect of a good congregation, and perhaps of what I have always coveted—*usefulness*. We have gradually increased, although Satan has been very busy against me; and I seem to hang by a single hair, on account of the new chapel.

Many think it will *drive me out* of Leicester; ~~He~~ only knows who knows all things. Three or four years ago these two scriptures were much on my mind—"Their valiant ones shall cry without: the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly," Isa. xxxiii. 7; and, "Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar; let them say, &c." Joel ii. 17.

I still have these passages in remembrance; I never had a greater *mountain* before me, nor less *faith* to work with since I knew the Lord. . . .

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend.*

Leicester, 1840.

. . . . I FOUND the York-street people in the most broken condition,—indeed, my fear was, lest they should soon be scattered upon the mountains.

It has pleased God to suffer several persons in this town to strive hard against me; they have done what they could to *blacken* me, and to hinder my work; still we have gradually increased, until, as I consider, we are very fairly attended—about 500 hearers on a Sabbath evening, most of whom are very poor in this world.

Humanly speaking, we seem to be creeping along as well as we could reasonably expect. And I have had a few testimonies of the Lord's *blessing* the Word; also I have had some seasons when there was a little light, power, and

unction upon my spirit. Still, in secret prayer I felt a partial shutting up, and a *cloud* of darkness on my mind, which seemed to say—"the *great* struggle, the *great* trial is yet to come!"

There is a man in this town who has built a new chapel, and purposes obtaining the *best* supplies, or an *able* minister. He is to bear the whole expenses, so that the people may have a *gratuitous* gospel. Any experienced and disinterested observer, knowing all the circumstances, would feel persuaded that the opening of this place will make a very deep impression upon *ours*. I have feared it would break it up altogether, and leave Thomas Hardy neither root nor branch standing.

If we are enabled to *stand*, I shall account it no less than a miracle! However, my general impression has been, that if I can abide awhile in Leicester, the Lord will ultimately raise and keep a people around me; but I look for heavy trials and many discouragements. I am trying, and I hope that I am in some measure enabled, to lay this matter at the feet of a gracious God, who, though He has often chastened me sorely, has *never* quite forsaken me. I have a little hope that if I am ultimately thrown out, the *Lord will pick me up!* . . .

The ministry is a *hard warfare* that *few* understand; but the Lord is all-sufficient. And blessed, eternally blessed be his name, for his great mercy to us this day. May He make and keep me both humble and thankful. Lord, help me to look to thee, and strengthen me to fight the good fight of faith. . . .

EDWARD BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend*.

Leicester, December 1840.

. . . . I HAVE had several human testimonies here, of the Lord's blessing the word amongst us, and I am often favoured with one or two good times on a Lord's day; but alas, the good wine soon leaks out, and I return to my own sad place.

Through the week I am much in the dark and heavily tried, yet, constrained to call upon God, and cry and *wait* for his appearing. I am not at present allowed to live a life of *sense* (although few like it better than I do), but “the just shall live by his *faith*.”

In times of trial, I find it a good thing to be constrained to cry to the Lord, and to be helped to trust in Him,—to cast my cares upon Him, look up to his throne, wait for him, and hope and believe that all my times of every kind are in his hand ; to fight with the world, sin, hell, and my own fears, to trust Him alone, when I cannot trace Him, and still hope that He does all for the best ; this I esteem a privilege, for it is written, “Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.”

We are in heaviness through manifold temptations, *if need be*. All is fixed and settled in God’s covenant, and surely there is a “*need be*” for *all* our trials, sorrows, temptations, scenes of darkness and desertion, losses, crosses, bereavements, foes, fears ; and even for our bondage, frames, and miserable feelings, rough places, storms, crooks, and bitters, are *all needful*. We cannot miss them, seeing they are *appointed* ; and for the same reason, we could not chalk out a better pathway to our rest,—that remaineth. In suffering times, the best DOING is to do nothing, but lie humbly and passively at our Father’s footstool, who says, “Be still, and know that I AM GOD.”

My heavenly Father will not spoil me with sweetmeats. He is wise, as well as gracious ; if I forget to *live by faith*, He will give me a few fresh lessons. He keeps a sharp rod for a froward child, and shows a frowning face to a fretful one. When He has by his Spirit made us meek, He will take us by the hand, guide, and further instruct us. A gracious Father makes a *quiet child*, and a quiet child *finds* a *gracious Father*. . . .

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

Leicester, January 1841.

MY BELOVED HUSBAND,

We have thought a great deal about you, and your arrival at Lakenheath.

. . . . Little M—— A—— said, “Father will see *my mother N——n*,” and *I* thought, you would see the *sacred spot*, where rest the remains of my beloved Henry.

I wept many times at the recollections of his sufferings in that place, and your afflictions ; and I wondered at the goodness of God in holding us up to the present hour, through such *seas of trouble* !

May the Lord make your visit a blessing both to your own soul, and to the souls of those with whom you commune. May He grant power to the word of his grace.

. . . . Latterly I have felt at times much cast down, and wondered what the Lord would do with us ; but I desire to leave *all in his* hands, who is, “too wise to err, too good to be unkind.” O, may He endue us with grace to commit our way unto Him, and also to put our trust in Him ; there is no *other refuge for us*, and in our right minds we *desire* no other. He has been our dwelling-place in all generations ; and He hath not cast off his people whom He did foreknow. Though clouds and darkness are round about Him, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne. My soul, hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of his countenance. . . .

I was much shocked to hear of the death of poor Mr. ———, it filled me with gloom all the day, for I feel myself to be such an unworthy sinful creature, that, if it had been a *conditional* salvation, which my dear Redeemer had wrought out, I am sure that *I should despair also*. But blessed be his name, it is *not* conditional.

O my soul, for ever bless his holy name for calling thee out of darkness, and making thee to trust in his blood and righteousness. Art thou not a monument of *special* grace ? O then, lie low in the dust of self-abasement,

seeing that He calleth to Him whom *He will*, and graciously condescends to tell them that they are blessed, who *hope in his mercy*.

When I awoke this morning, how sweet were these lines to my soul: "The Lord in the day of his anger did lay our sins on the Lord, and he bore them away."

O, how inestimable did I feel a crucified Christ! and who can be sufficiently thankful for such an unspeakable gift?

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

At last the new chapel was completed, and Mr. —, of —, was announced to open it on Christmas day, 1840, which he did, apparently regardless of the consequences to other chapels in the same town. Indeed, as this gentleman had two good livings of his own, he had not much reason to be solicitous as to what effect this new opening might have on the flocks of others; and for my part I did not on the day of opening care to try the experiment,—I closed my chapel.

On the ensuing Sabbath, when the same gentleman again preached, I missed more than one-third of my congregation. The circumstance reminded me strongly of the old fable of the boys and the frogs,—what was sport to the stronger party was death to the weaker.

My little congregation, though thus thinned, rallied again; but as their numbers rose and fell alternately, I had no idea what they would be until I saw them.

Matters were now approaching a crisis; my family was large, and my congregation poor. With these difficulties I had, through the Divine favour, grappled successfully, but this *new* uncertainty excited in my mind, as it would have done with others in a similar position, no little *uneasiness*. Had my family been less *numerous*, I might have desired to make a *longer trial*;

but under existing circumstances, I had no prospect but that of *want*, or starvation, and I began to see that the only alternative was a *removal*. However undesirable this might be in some respects, in all human prudence it seemed necessary, and inevitable. Yet I *took no step* towards it. I only carried my case to my gracious Lord, beseeching Him to order and guide my way, and to undertake for me; and He heard and attended to my cry, and did for me more than I had ever desired, or thought of.

At this juncture I was invited for one month to supply the pulpit of Gower-street chapel, London, recently vacant by the death of Mr. Fowler. Having obtained the consent of my church, I accepted the invitation.

It was a Providence that I was at a loss to understand, for through much trial my spirit was depressed and broken, and my health infirm, and in no respect did I account myself equal to fill Gower-street pulpit, even for a single Sabbath. And this misgiving was strengthened on my arrival among them in March 1841. As I looked round from the pulpit I shrank from such a congregation; and feeling during the singing of the second hymn quite shut up, I prayed that if it were *more* for the *Lord's glory* to *shut* my mouth than to open it, that He would so deal with me, doing what seemed best in his sight, for I desired to be wholly submissive to his will. In this dark and trying state, I read my text, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul," and before I had spoken ten minutes, my bonds were removed, and a strong conviction came upon me that I was preaching to *living souls*. The sensation was so strong that I could have stopped in my discourse, and said aloud, "I am *sure this is a living people!*" And from that time forward, I felt towards them a strong and an irresistible *union*.

They, on their part, were equally cordial; I never

before met with so warm a reception in any place, nor received so *many testimonies* of the Lord's *blessing* the word preached as on that journey. Nor do I now question, either the sincerity and reality of these statements, or that the Lord *did* abundantly *bless my testimony* during that visit.

I made all due allowance for my being a stranger, and quitted that people (after supplying six weeks) with this wish upon my heart, that if it pleased the Lord, I might be permitted to serve them *once a year*, as other ministers did. *This* was the extent of my wishes.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend.*

London, March 1841.

. My being shifted about from place to place, would have been a greater trial to me than it has, had it not been for the application of those words, "Many shall *run to and fro*, and *knowledge shall be increased.*" From which I learnt, that I had a *roving commission*, as has been the lot of many before me. For "Jesus sent out his disciples two by two, into all places whither he himself would come." "Behold I am with thee in all places whither thou goest, and I will keep thee, and will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." And, "Lo ! I am with you always, unto the end of the world."

O, if the good Lord will be *with me*, and keep me in this way that I go, and give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again unto my Father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God, and this stone which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house, and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

Blessed be this holy name, though my way has been dark and slippery, He has not left me, or forsaken me ; he keeps me feeling after Him and the Apostle says, "He

is not far from every one of us," "and Gideon's Lord, and David's friend, will ever help his servants to the end." Will He not, as He has promised me, bring the blind by a way they know not, and lead me in paths that I had not known, and made darkness light, and crooked things into straightness? These things He will do unto us, and not forsake us. Our name is, "Sought out, a city not forsaken." Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. And judgment shall return unto righteousness, and the upright in heart shall follow it. Esau's lot is called the border of wickedness, but of Zion, it is said, "Jehovah Shammah, the Lord is there."

Although *men* have cried out after me as after a *thief*, yet the Lord has in this place given me *many testimonies* out of the hearts of some of his *poor tried saints*. O, what condescension is it, that the King of Saints should ever deign to bless the word from the heart and lips of such an unworthy wretch as I am! Be it recorded to his everlasting honour and praise! But He is a God that doeth nothing but wonders. He sometimes permits me to feel a little of his *presence* in speaking to the people. Here I would shout Grace! grace! and hereafter I hope to shout Glory! glory!

O, surely if ever God brings me into that rest, which I now long for, there will be a *noble shout* from all the heavenly Host, to the alone praise of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for ever bringing one so mean, vile, and worthless, into that blissful state. Happy songsters, when shall I your chorus join?

E. BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend*.

Leicester, March 1841.

. . . . My conscience has often smote me for not writing, but since I have been at Leicester, my poor mind has been so completely absorbed with my dear husband's

affairs, that, alas! I have been very prone to neglect some of those sweet charities of life in which I was wont to take pleasure.

You know, my dear friend, that we have been a good deal tossed about; and since we have been here, I have had such an intense desire that my dear husband should be *settled at this place*, and made to stand like a brazen wall and an iron pillar, and that the Lord would condescend to undertake for us, and grant us prosperity, until we at least got a *little breathing-time*.

But oh! I have been made to see and feel that *this is not obedience*. Some time ago, the Lord sent this sweet Scripture with *power* to my soul: "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?"

Since then, I have been quite content to leave it in the Lord's hands, and let Him work us *in or out*, just as He pleases.

"How rough soe'er the way,
Dear Saviour, still lead on,
Nor leave us till we say,
Father, thy will be done."

In this I have felt peace and content of mind, whereas, when I was so anxious to have *my will* done, I felt nothing but jeopardy; every flying report about that tiresome new chapel plagued me. O what a mercy it is for us that the Lord makes our *own ways reprove* us! I am sure I ever and anon feel myself to be such a froward child before God, that I stand in need of *suffering* to make me obedient, and to make me abhor myself; and then I can but wonder at the exceeding riches of that grace which leads me to repentance, even after I have been *dictating* to, and rebelling against, God

But really I cannot describe the sufferings we have had, nor the many nights and days that my dear husband has been racked with soul exercise, and I with him, for I cannot but sympathise in his sorrows.

One Saturday night, in particular, he was greatly distressed, and after tossing about all the night, he got up in an agony, saying, "O dear! these men will *drive me* and

my *poor children* about again, and I shall not know what to do with you all !”

I burst into tears to see him faint so in the conflict, and I said, “O no ! God has been our hiding-place from all generations. It will never do for *you* to cast away confidence in God in this manner.”

But while I said this, my own heart fainted, and I thought he never could preach *that* day. But the outstretched arm of the Lord was made bare, and that morning I had such a time in my soul as I hope never to forget.

My husband was preaching from Rom. vi. 4, and when he was endeavouring to portray the sufferings of Christ, oh how plainly the Lord enabled me to see that we were (in *our little measure*) filling up that part of *His* sufferings which remain for the church of God ! and I rejoiced that we were counted *worthy to suffer with* the Lord, and to *taste* of that cup which He had drunk to the bottom. How sweet were those words of Hart to me then !—

“ See the suffering church of God
Gather'd from all quarters :
All that stand in that red list
Were not murder'd martyrs.”

Bless the Lord, I often have sweet sealing times in my soul under the Word. The Gospel is a *joyful sound to me*. I find Christ and his cross increasingly precious, and then I say to my husband, “Never mind what *man* can do unto you ; but remember what God says, ‘ No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper.’ ”

And I do believe, my dear friend, although I would not say it to any but a *tender heart*, that the more a poor servant of Christ is tried, harassed, and dismayed, the more God is graciously pleased to lead him into the *mystery, majesty, and glory* of his most *precious word* ; therefore, *all* things work together for good to them who love God, and are the called according to his purpose.

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

CHAPTER XXIX.

[1841.]

RETURNS TO LEICESTER—TWELVE MONTHS EXPIRED—INVITED TO PASTORAL OFFICE—SEEKS COUNSEL OF GOD—TAKES NO ACTIVE STEP—SCRIPTURE APPLIED—RESIGNS—BLESSING ON PSALMS—TRIED IN MIND—INVITED TO SOHO CHAPEL—GOES TO LONDON, MAY 1841—CORRESPONDENCE DURING EIGHT MONTHS' SEPARATION FROM WIFE.

ON my return to Leicester, my twelve months' engagement there had nearly expired. The church met, and invited me to take the pastoral office; but under the circumstances detailed above, as I saw no *prospect of support*, I told them I durst not receive it.

At the same time, I did not on that account decide to leave them; I took *no active step* in the matter, but only carried my cause before the Lord, and prayed to Him to show me what course to take, whether to remain at Leicester, or to remove. In answer to my prayer, He sent me these words: "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come," Matt. x. 22, 23.

These were to me *solemn* words. They clearly showed me my way out of Leicester, and gave me a gracious intimation that God would *somewhere* find another place for me. After pondering much upon this Scripture, and waiting until my engagement was nearly ended, I wrote a note to the church, resigning my

charge over them ; yet for fear of taking a *wrong step*, I hesitated to send it, but paused for further direction, and constantly entreated the Lord to give me another confirming word, that I might be clearly and fully directed in this matter. He then sent me these words : " Now having no more place in these parts," Rom. xv. 23. This solemnly brought me to a final decision.

I dated and then sent in my note and resignation ; and then withdrawing to a throne of grace, I gave up my charge into the hands of the Lord, and begged Him as He closed one door, graciously to open for me another. In this spirit, and with this prayer, looking to the throne of God as my *only refuge*, I pleaded with Him for hours.

In the evening of that day I walked out upon the Humberstone-road, taking the book of Psalms with me, in the hope of finding some passage from which I might give a short address at the prayer-meeting that night.

Tried, and cast down at the contemplation of my present position, I leant over a gate, and opened my book : one psalm after another, as I read it, flowed sweetly into my soul, minutely described my case and my feelings, and spoke to me with *such power*, that I exclaimed aloud, " I am all in the *right still* ! this word and I must *stand or fall together* ! "

Now there arose in my mind a sweet confidence in God, accompanied with such divine peace, that, for that night, my burden was comparatively light. Yet I continued to beg of God, that, as He had closed one opening here, He would make another for me elsewhere.

But the next morning when I awoke, all my burdens returned. My dear wife was set before me, *declining health*, with my poor children, suffering *as from my rashness* in resigning ; and Satan

troubled me with the reproach of having by this act brought them all to beggary.

My misery was unutterable ; but I concealed it from my family, and again betook myself to my walk on the Humberstone-road, with the intention of doing again what I had often done there, breathing out my sorrows. But the power of prayer was gone. I could no more pray than mount to the sun in a chariot.

The enemy still pursued me with the threats of *want* and *destitution*, and yet I could *not* condemn myself. Whatever others might think, I was convinced that I must either remove from Leicester, or suffer want. In this state I returned home about one o'clock, and endeavoured to take some dinner, lest my distress should overwhelm my family, who were in troubles enough. The enemy followed me, suggesting that post-time was past an hour and a half, (which was true,) and there was no letter for me, (which was also true,) and therefore there was no hope of relief from any quarter. "There !" said the tempter, "you entreated the Lord, as he shut one door, to open another ; but it is now clear that he has *not* done so, and *will not* !"

But in this I proved the enemy a *liar*. While we sat at dinner, the well-known knock was heard. My wife entered with a *letter*, which I opened. It contained an invitation to Soho chapel, London, for five Sabbaths. I should as soon have expected an invitation to Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

It was the hand of the Lord ; I saw and felt it, and my soul was happy. The letter had been written on the very day on which I sent in my resignation. How evident was it, then, that, *without any communication* with *man*, on my part, the Lord had literally fulfilled my prayers, and that, as He *shut* one door, He had *opened* another !

I completed my time with the Leicester friends,

and received my last 8*l.* from them, after I had preached my farewell sermon.

The gracious hand of God had certainly been upon us for good. I believe the Lord sent more pecuniary help the year I was with them than He had ever done before in the same space of time; not less, I think, than 160*l.*; and when I left, about 14*l.* remained in the treasurer's care, which was nearly the amount in hand when I went there.

I quitted Leicester with regret: I liked many of the people, and was sorry to part from them; but I felt the *necessity* to be imperative.

I went to London in May 1841, and during a period of almost *eight months* I was separated from my dear wife and children.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend.*

Leicester, May 1841.

If I hear nothing to the contrary, I propose reaching your house on Friday. Next Sabbath will be my last here: this I will explain when we meet. I felt sure I had *no more place in these parts.*

On the tenth of this month, after much sorrow and exercise of mind, and several attempts to look to the Lord, having had one or two remarkable passages of Scripture upon my mind, I gave in my resignation.

My trials, temptations and circumstances I could not describe to you either by tongue or pen. I had to exhort at the prayer-meeting that night, and being unable to *contain myself* in the house, I went out, opened in the Psalms, and tried to hit upon a Psalm to speak from. I never in my life felt anything exactly like it: the *whole* book of Psalms seemed to *fit and suit all my case* so exactly that I could no longer hold out, but broke forth and said, "If the Psalms are true, I am a child of God, aye, and a *servant* of Christ, however poor or despised."

'ord did fit my conscience, as a right key does the

wards of a lock. God gave me a naked faith in his naked word, and I felt as if the truth of God in the Bible, and I, must sink or swim together. I mused on these things, and said, "What a blessing to be an *outcast of Zion!*" I began to experience this, and felt as if I could die peaceably on the divine testimony.

I was soon strengthened to cast myself at the feet of Christ, on the ground of those words, "Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out;" and I *believed* he *never* would cast me out. Self-trust, and trust in man, were entirely cut up in my soul, and I felt ashamed of my want of confidence, and was enabled to give my mortal interest up into the hands of Christ, and *all* that did or does pertain to me.

I said, "Lord, only save me, and then *do as thou wilt with me*. Here I am : do as seemeth thee good." I then felt a little of these words, "Great peace have all they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." I seemed strengthened to pray to God, and in a *particular* manner, too, though without either joy or comfort ; and I afterwards felt safe, and as if God would *surely* answer me.

I was still and peaceable ; I had not taken a *single step* of any sort, by way of trying to find an opening, (even to supply,) yet I was kept calm all night. Next morning, however, my burden was laid on again, and a heavy one it felt ! I set off to the same place, to see if I might be strengthened to cast it upon the Lord ; but I could pray no more than a post, though I made many attempts. I thought this looked very dark, and I felt very wretched.

However, that day, before one o'clock, I received an invitation to supply at Soho. This letter bore the *same date* as my letter of *resignation*, and I could not but feel thankful, as it proved that the Lord *did* condescend to answer *even my poor prayers*. Our people refused to let me go, and I thought they were about to play the part of the dog in the manger ; yet I let *man* alone, and took it to the Lord ; and last Sunday night, of their own accord, they peaceably agreed to my going, whenever a door to supply should open for me. .

A little before twelve last night, I completed my fiftieth year. Being full of trouble, I lay awake, and my thoughts were carried back to the time of my mother's painful hour, and I said to myself, Lord, what is man! Oh, what a life of *sin* and *woe* did mine seem to be! I was burdened nearly as bad as ever, and had only a *little trust*, while the enemy said it was presumption! But I durst neither believe him, nor my own deceitful heart. I walked the room, and then tossed to and fro on the bed; at length I tried the *only* method once more; and in a few hours I received the invitation mentioned.

I have no eye to any place, for I am where *human eyes* are of no use. But Jesus will lead me as the blind: it is my desire He should. If He will but let me feel Him *near*. I can trust to *his* eye and arm. He will keep me; He will lead and guide me. I desire my love to Mr. G——y. Accept the same yourselves, and believe me your tried brother and companion in the blessed path of much tribulation,

EDW. BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, to *his Wife*.

London, June 1841.

DEAR WIFE AND CHILDREN,

I reached here safely, and learnt that Mr. G——y had just received a letter from B——, complaining of my conduct at Leicester. I called upon God, . . . and when we met I urged him to examine me *closely*; and when I had replied to his questions, and he had heard my replies, his *manner changed*, and he became the *same* as he has been for years; but whether they will *turn him again* I cannot tell.

I preached at Soho, but they complained of my speaking *too low*. On Thursday, in Great Alie-street, I was as loud as I durst venture; I expectorated some blood the following morning. What the Lord means to do with me, I know not.

The Lord have mercy upon us! If ever we had *need to pray we have now.*

With a heart full of exercise, I remain in faithful love,
your affectionate husband,

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

Leicester, June 1841.

. ALTHOUGH in general my mind has been kept still, hoping that the Lord will yet appear from behind the cloud, and make a way in the desert for us, yet at other times I seem to faint on the journey, and then I betake myself to the *only remedy.*

Several times a day I endeavour to spread out our case before the Lord, and sometimes I enjoy liberty and *sweet access*; and can feelingly commit *all* into his hands, believing that you are *his servant*,—engaged in a work in which *his own honour* is concerned, and that He will *surely* bring you through to praise his great name.

O, what a marvellous thing it is that God should condescend to *encourage us*, and *draw* us to his feet, to cast our burdens upon Him! Often when I have no faith in exercise, and darkness and fears pervade my breast, before I leave off pleading with God, my troubles are *all gone!*

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his Wife.*

Leicester, June 1841.

. SEVERAL times a day I try to cast myself, my ministry, and my family, upon the Lord, but I am often very much cast down, especially at the prospect of being *so long* separated from you all. . . . I am very glad that you have a spirit of prayer given to you. I daily pray to God that He would so favour you, for we have great need of his appearance. Your much tried, but ever loving and faithful husband,

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

P.S.—I always wish you to write to me on a Friday, because it eases my mind on a Lord's-day to know that

you are all well. I believe Satan's drift is to throw a heavy gloom over the mind,—“In heaviness through manifold temptations,” (viz. trials and temptations). I had as good a day yesterday as I could expect ; I hope the Lord helped me.

E. B.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his Wife.*

London, July 1841.

. . . . I HAVE been thinking what a poor life of *suffering* and *sorrow* you have had to *live with me* ; seldom, indeed, long without an affliction of some sort or other ; and the chief source of comfort which I can now think upon concerning *you* is, that you *know* in whom you have believed, and that He is able to keep that which you have committed to Him until *that* day, when He will make up and *put you* beside his jewels.

What a mercy it is to be the Lord's ! for although our life may be attended with many evils, and we may have to pass through many thorns and briers,

“ Yet the dear path to thine abode
Lies through this horrid land ;
Lord, help us still to keep the road
That leads to thy right hand.”

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth Him out of them *all*.

We have long seen and felt that in every city, or place, bonds and afflictions abide us. But I hope the Lord will lay no more upon us than He will *sanctify* and *bless to us*. And I hope He will *powerfully comfort* and *support you*, and make all his goodness pass before you in the way. . . .

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

Leicester, July 1841.

MY DEARLY BELOVED HUSBAND,

We are all anxious to hear how you got through your
I have endeavoured to implore the divine pro-

tection and blessing upon you ; you are always in my thoughts, and my heart is with you wherever you are.

In all *your afflictions I am afflicted*, and in your seasons of rejoicing, I desire that my soul may bear her part in giving thanks unto God. I find I cannot separate myself from this feeling of sympathy if I would, but indeed I have no desire, and am sure that your welfare, as a *poor servant of Christ*, lies *very near* my heart.

The Lord has made *you the instrument of good to my soul*, and I cannot cease to pray for you ; my fervent desire before God is, that He would condescend to make you a useful servant in his vineyard, and uphold you with his own almighty arm. I know yours is a path of tribulation, and that you are made to feel, that without Christ you can do nothing ; a sense of this upon my own spirit, impels me to supplicate God for you ; and I can say that at times I feel such drawings out of soul, and such softening influence upon my heart, as constrains me feebly to hope that *He will be with us to the end* ; that He will never leave, nor forsake us.

Last Friday when dear J—— and I had parted with you we returned home rather sorrowful, and the children proposed a walk to dissipate our gloom ; when we reached the Dane-hills, I sat down to rest while the children ran up and down them. I felt thankful to see them all together again, and a little pleased that they looked so nice and well, but that rising glow was soon checked by the recollection of my *late bereavements*. I found vent for my feelings in tears, and then my thoughts were turned to the *many mercies* which God had caused me to prove. In the midst of all his chastisements, He still has remembered mercy.

The dear children all unite in kindest love. You are ever in our minds, and the constant theme of our domestic conversation. May the dear Lord bless you, and sustain you under your trials ; make you to prove his grace *sufficient* for you ; and may his almighty arm bring you through all that his infinite wisdom sees good to lay upon you ; perhaps we shall *yet have to bless Him for every dispensation* of his unerring providence.

I desire an interest in your prayers, and I pray the Lord to bless me with a spirit of prayer for you. May He stand sensibly by you in your work, give you your testimony, clothe it with divine power, seal it on the consciences of his people, and make you a useful servant to his family, and one approved of Him.

Your ever affectionate and devoted wife,

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend.*

Leicester, July 1841.

. . . . My wife has been very ill for the last fortnight, and is unwell still, but much better now than she was. She has had a very bad cough, with much expectoration, and has been under the physician's hand.

You will perhaps remember that some years ago I had two scriptures applied to my mind. Mrs. — also had the same scriptures applied to her mind about me, since which I have ever and anon been looking for what has now taken place. Isaiah xxxiii. 7, and Joel ii. 17.

Yet though I have been *looking so long for it*, I find it *no small trial* now it is come. But God has said, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." I find I am to have *all sorts* of trials; may the Lord sanctify them to me, and make them profitable to my soul. I believe that *most are at ease* in Zion, save those who are kept *alive by means of sharp tribulation*.

The way to our Father's house is rough and thorny, but when we are favoured to reach our blissful home, the troubles of the way will either be forgotten, or there will be no painful remembrance of them. I do not find my path get *smoother*, or the world *less deceitful*, or my heart get *any better*, or Christ *less precious* to me than formerly; He is all I have left out of the spoils of this evil time.

And even my hope is sharply battered, yet I dare not *give way to doubtings*, but desire to trust in the Lord; come what will, I want to lie in the arms of Christ, or if I may

so indulged, to lie at his feet. "Many changes I
seen," but I know the Lord *changes not*, and that
are they, and *only* they, who are favoured to trust

I am glad to find that you are still concerned about your
state: the things of this life are comparatively of
little value. "For what is a man profited if he shall gain
the whole world?" &c. "Or what shall a man give in
exchange for his soul?"

Let the Lord stir you up, and strengthen you to seek
Him, until He shall *reveal unto* you his love with

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

Leicester, August 1841.

. We all feel very anxious about you; to be kept in
seclusion is a painful sort of torture, but it is a mercy that
allows your *mind at home* and at *liberty* in your work.
Be to be thankful for that.

Daily carry our case to God, and beseech Him to
make for us; but as yet He sees good to defer an
answer. I know there is nowhere else to go, and I feel
compelled to tell Him our troubles and our wants, and to
wait *patiently* for his appearing. But I have long found
that *faith* and *patience* are *heavenly gifts*; we cannot
put them into exercise ourselves, yet when I am in a
measure endued by the Holy Spirit with these fruits
I gladly exercise, I welcome all the dispensations of God
to me. I sensibly feel that *nothing can come wrong*
where duties are easy, rough places plain, and privations
supportable; then I can say feelingly, "The Lord is my
portion, I shall not want," &c.

Alas! how soon I get out of the heavenly pasture;
an evil heart beguiles me to stray from my loving
Saviour, and I find my peace gone before I am aware. The
Satan of souls sends some mistrustful thought; I *yield* to it,
I sink upon it, until I am overcome by the *vile* principle

of *unbelief*; then, I am afraid that the Lord will *not* appear for us!—that we shall come to want! and ten thousand imaginary evils affright me!

Such had been my case all the week, and I had not been able to rise above it; but last night, when I had committed you, myself, and our dear children, to God in prayer, He was graciously pleased to lead my soul to consider his *former acts* of loving-kindness, and his *providential* dealings with us . . . and will He forget his covenant with his saints? No! we are graven on the palms of his hands. O, said I, how can I *doubt* his goodness, and thereby dishonour such a gracious God? . . .

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, to her Husband.

Leicester, August 1841.

. . . . I FEEL much for you in your trials,—indeed, they are my own; but my ardent desire is, that the Lord may enable us to resign ourselves to his sovereign will; yet when I offer this supplication at his footstool, I cannot help beseeching Him for his mercy's sake to *hasten* the happy time when we shall be favoured to *dwell together under the same roof*, that my dear children and myself may once more enjoy our wonted privileges, and have the object of our affections and solicitude amongst us again.

These *long separations* are more painful than I can describe! Poor little Mary Ann says it must be *years* since you left her, and she sees no use in having a father, if she cannot have him with her! These dispensations appear needful, and circumstances so come upon us, as to call the *principles* of our religion into *action*, and *compel us to believe* that *all events* are under the sovereign sway of Him with whom we have to do. Not a sparrow can fall to the ground without our heavenly Father's permission.

My fervent prayer is for your welfare and prosperity; may the Lord comfort you in your sorrows and disappoint-

ments, encourage you in your difficulties, keep you near his blessed bosom, and cause you to hold sweet and sacred communion with Him.

When you stand up in his name, may you sensibly feel his power and presence, helping you to declare the whole counsel of God; and may your labours be abundantly blessed to the souls of his children, so that the glorious *promise* which God made to you, upon your *first going forth*, may be verified in your experience. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, to her Husband.

Leicester, September 1841.

. . . . I KNOW you are often constrained to beg of God to *search* your testimony, and to lead you into *all* truth,—you cannot go on safer ground; and my fervent prayer for you is, that God the Holy Spirit may condescend to be your teacher and guide, and give you wisdom in all things, that you may approve yourself unto God, a servant that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

O may He stand sensibly by you in your work, for surely it is the most *responsible calling* that ever a mortal man can be put into! But if *He* is your teacher—as I humbly trust He is—He will *own you at last*. Therefore it is *with God* you have to do. I cannot cease to pray for you—your concerns are laid with *great weight* upon my spirit, and I do at times feel very much drawn out at a throne of grace for you; therefore think not that you set me a *task*, when you say, "*Pray for me,*" for the more you are *opposed, persecuted, rejected, and afflicted*, the more occasion I feel I have to cry unto God for you; believing as I do that it was *God himself* who put your hands to the *plough*, and I am sure it must be *He* who has kept you at it.

Therefore look not back, but press towards the mark for the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus. You will *yet finish your course with joy*, and the ministry which you have received of the Lord Jesus. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

You remember that gracious promise of your God. May He grant you a good day on the coming Sabbath.

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

Leicester, September 1841.

MY BELOVED HUSBAND,

I am thankful to find that you are in bodily health, although still tried in mind; but be of good courage! Perhaps the Lord may appear when we *least expect it*, and make straight paths for your feet, because of your enemies.

Yours is, indeed, a path of many trials, and with a mind so *sensitive* you *must* feel it; yet it will *not do* to take *too much* thought for the morrow. The Lord give us grace to watch, and pray, and wait; He may *yet* arise for our help. I am constrained daily to lay our case before Him, and to beg of Him to hear the prayer of the destitute.

Surely He will perform his own most glorious promise, and bring us through. It is well for us, under any circumstances, to *hope* in his *mercy*. . . .

I was sorry that you had a dull day last Sabbath, but God in all things is a *sovereign*, and it is just in Him to act as He pleases with you, and to show us that He *will do so*. Without these repeated lessons of divine sovereignty, we might cease to implore his help, we might forget how dependent we are upon Him, grow proud, and be utterly forsaken of God.

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, to her *Husband*.

Leicester, September 1841.

. . . . I FEEL deeply concerned for you, my dear husband, and pray that God may *guide* your footsteps *right*; I am sure you are placed in a position which will exercise your mind very much, as it does mine.

It is my daily prayer that the Lord would condescend to *open you a door* which "*no man can shut*;" but I begin to fear that whatever door is opened for you, MAN will *try to shut it*. You have to work your way through much opposition. I believe you are spiritually attached to the people at Gower-street, and I can say that it has been my prayer that God would be graciously pleased to own your labours to their souls' profit.

I never felt a greater concern for you than I have done since you have been there; that God would stand sensibly by you whenever you stand up in his great name, and help you to preach the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, that it might *come into their souls with power and unction*, and bring forth *fruit* an hundred-fold, to his honour and glory. That you might be the instrument, in God's hand, of building them up, and confirming their souls in the faith of Christ. That He would keep you near his blessed bosom, and teach you *how* to feed his flock; that you might be *divinely taught* to *lead* them into green pastures, and beside the still waters. O that God may give you his wisdom, guide you by his Spirit, uphold you with his own arm, favour you to ask counsel of Him, and to be decided *by his counsel*.

It is a thing too high for me to meddle with; for is there a man or woman on earth, who has been renewed in the spirit of their mind, and has received the Holy Ghost, and the remission of sins by the blood of Christ, for whom I do not feel a sympathy if they are *deprived* of their *privileges*? No, not one! I have myself *felt what it is*, and can feel for another. And I would rather suffer

privations than be the cause of bringing them upon any one.

My chief desire is that *you* should be a servant approved unto God, that needeth not to be ashamed at his appearing—that you may at last receive the glorious invitation of your beloved Redeemer—“Enter thou into the joy of my Lord.”

I feel much sympathy for you; I believe it is *our* lot to be amongst the suffering part of Christ's body mystical. Last Sabbath morning I was under great concern for you; I felt cast down in my soul, and I thought I should have a gloomy day. I opened the Bible to read in my family, and I opened upon the 20th chapter of the Acts. And O how the Lord broke into my soul, and dissolved my heart in tears. I wept for the sufferings of the apostle—I found such sweet fellowship with him—and I wept for *your sufferings*.

I could indeed see that you were *brethren*, that the same spirit actuated both, that the same afflictions (to a certain extent) were accomplished in both, and I was constrained from my very soul, to bless the Lord that the *offence of the cross* had *not ceased* with you—for therein it was, I could plainly see, that you had to suffer; and O such a blessed hope sprang up in my heart, that “*after* we had *suffered awhile*,” we should reign with Him.

Then, I could feelingly say, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” And I could not but believe that you would yet *finish your course* with *joy*, and the ministry which you have received of the Lord Jesus.

O may He abundantly bless you, and solemnly prepare you for the services of the sanctuary on the coming Sabbath, give you a door of utterance, and seal your testimony on the souls of his people by the *invincible power* of the Holy Spirit. And may *He* direct and counsel you in all the important things with which you have to do. And believe me to remain, your ever-loving, affectionate, and sympathising wife,

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

Leicester, September 1841.

. . . . I DESIRE that my eyes may be up unto Him for you, on the coming Sabbath. O, may He give you strength and wisdom to stand up in his great name, and faithfully declare the unsearchable riches of Christ, trusting that if you are favoured to mind *his household*, and, as an instrument, to feed *his* sheep and lambs, He will not forget to *supply* your *little lambs at home*.

He always has appeared, and let us hope He will again appear. When He sent you out at first, it was without purse or scrip, and He has brought us safely thus far on our journey ; and I have heard you say, that our dear Redeemer does not,—as some earthly friends do,—bring us *part* of the way and *leave us* ; but blessed be his name, He guides us to the *end*, all the while teaching us, that the way to our Father's kingdom lies "*through much tribulation*," and that, to be a stranger and a pilgrim upon the earth, is *not to live a life of ease*.

I was looking last night at the thorny road through which we had passed, and the words of the Patriarch suited my feelings : " Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life," losses, crosses, disappointments, afflictions, and bereavements, have bestrewed our path. But hitherto the Lord hath blessed us. And He *will help us* until we have accomplished, as an hireling, our day. Then, " Though we have been among the pots, we shall be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers of yellow gold."

We are *in the way* the fathers trod, and may a good hope through grace, inspire us with zeal to bear the troubles of the way, as *becometh* those who are *alive from the dead*, remembering that our times are in his hand, that He will guide our doubtful footsteps right, and bring us to prove that,

" In time, and to eternal days,
'Tis with the righteous well."

Hoping to have a letter from you on Tuesday morning

and assuring you that I am your ever-loving and affectionate wife at all times, and under all circumstances.

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend.*

Leicester, September 1841.

. . . . I NEED not be afraid to tell you, my beloved friends, that I believe my dear husband is a *persecuted* man. But if you cannot altogether take *that* in, I know you will agree with me in this, that by some means or other, his *nest* is *often stirred up*, and he is brought down into sorrow.

You will not think he would do this for himself, (as some have ungenerously said,) no, for although he is a man encompassed with infirmities, has no righteousness of his own, neither pretends to any perfection in the flesh, but is (with the rest of his brethren) liable to falls, and mistakes : yet am I sure that he has been *misrepresented*, *reviled*, and *evil* spoken of *without cause*, even as his dear Master was. And sometimes I can rejoice that he has to *taste the same cup*, and partake of the *same sufferings*, though in a very small measure.

O, it is *possible* for a poor servant of Christ to be brought into such circumstances, as none of his brethren who are *at ease* can perfectly understand. And then they will say, "Ah, he is *too hasty* ! this is his *own fault* ! and *that* is his own fault !" Until the poor man, like Job, is *covered* with faults !

But I will tell you, my beloved friends, how I am obliged to resolve these afflictive movements in Divine Providence towards us, even as the Psalmist did, when he said, "The *steps* of a good man are *ordered by the Lord*, and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." O, when my feeble faith can lay hold on such a gracious declaration as this, I feel *quite resigned*, "how

rough so e'er the way." But, alas, there are other times when I feel cast down ; mistrust and unbelief prevail in my heart, and the adversary assaults my soul with dismal forebodings, spreading before me the troubles of the way, in such a gloomy light, and suggesting the fear of such long separations, (deprived of the means of grace,) that I groan under the burden, and find it *too* heavy for me to bear.

Then, he will tell me not to concern myself with my husband's affairs, that he can pray for himself. But I find I could as soon *cease to live*, as lay aside concern for *him*, when he is *in trouble*. Then I try to pray, and cast my burden upon the Lord, endeavouring to rely on his gracious promise, "I will sustain thee," but O, too often I *retain* my burden, and find it heavier than before.

Still, there is nowhere else to flee, and I find no rest in my soul except when I can tell the Lord my trouble. And blessed, for ever blessed be his name, it is a *strong tower* into which I am now and then favoured to run, and find such Divine security as constrains me to say, "*All is well!*" No tribulations which we feel, no foes on earth, nor fiends of hell, can tear us from his heart.

Such was my case on Sabbath morning last ; I went down stairs very much cast down in soul, and I thought it would be a gloomy day ; I opened the Bible to read in my family, and the twentieth chapter of the Acts was presented to me. And O, my beloved friends, I wish I could tell you how *blessedly the Lord broke into my soul*, whilst I was reading that chapter, and dissolved my heart in tears ; I found such sweet fellowship with the Apostle, I wept for his sufferings, and I wept for the sufferings of *another whom I know*. I could indeed see that they were *brethren*, that the same Spirit actuated both, that the same afflictions (to a certain extent) were accomplished in both. And I was constrained from my very soul to bless the Lord, that the *offence* of the cross had *not* ceased with my dear husband, and therefore it was (I could plainly see) that he had to suffer.

O, it is no *light* matter to be a preacher of God's *dis-*

criminating truth, for all men do not love it. It is "a savour of life unto life, and of death unto death." "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake," said the dear Redeemer. But what an unspeakable mercy it is now and then, to have a soul cheering assurance, that if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him! The blessed anticipation of our future inheritance inspires us with zeal to run the heavenly race, and press towards the mark for the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

O, to have Christ formed in our hearts, the hope of glory, is *all and everything!* When I can *feelingly enjoy* it, then I can with feeling say, "Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." O, that such seasons of heavenly comfort might come more *frequently* unto me! But, alas! I have to lament that, for the most part of my time, my soul lies cleaving to the dust, and I can only cry, "*Quicken* thou me." O, that I should live so far beneath my privileges, more prone to nurse trouble, than look to the hills from whence my help must come. But so it is, seasons of darkness and desertion come upon me, unbelief rages, and I have to prove what an earthly worm I am, *incapable* of thinking *one* good thought, *believing one* precious promise, or lifting up my heart unto God in a single instance *without* the *powerful* operations of God the Holy Spirit.

But, adored be the exceeding riches of his grace, who hath made such ample provision for us; He hath appointed his Spirit to be our guide, our teacher, and our comforter; to revive us when we droop, and to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us; that having died to redeem us, *He will* perfect for ever that which concerns us. When in *his* light I see things, O, then I can *believe all* that my heavenly Father hath said; and believe too, that my dear husband will *yet* finish his *course with joy*, and the ministry which he hath received of the Lord Jesus.

Perhaps in this last, you may be ready to think me sanguine, and that natural affection prompts me to hope

for these things. But no ! God has solemnly taught me, that hearing and receiving the Gospel is a *soul important* matter. And when in my right mind I go to hear my husband, I am constrained to beg of God to put the treasure into the earthen vessel, that the excellency of the *power* may be of *God*, and *not of man* ; then all idea of natural relationship is laid aside, and I *hear for God*, and *for eternity*. And, to the honour of God I desire to say it, the testimony of his poor servant has been so often *sealed* upon my soul by the *invincible power* of the Holy Ghost, that I have felt it to be the truth, which I must *live* by, and *die* by ; and at such seasons I feel so bound to the instrument for the *truth's sake*, that I could go with him round the globe, to prison, or to death, for the hope which is set before me in the Gospel.

O then, I look not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are *not* seen and eternal ; and my ardent desire is, that he may be a servant approved unto God, and at last receive the gracious invitation of his beloved Redeemer, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Sometimes I believe these things will all come to pass, as *surely as God is true* ! O, may you and I, my beloved friends, as we journey through this thorny wilderness, have more frequent antepasts of the glory that awaits us as poor believers in Christ, and may all our trials transform us more into his image. In kindest love unto you, and—I subscribe myself,

Your ever affectionate friend,

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend*.

Leicester, September 1841.

. . . . If any insinuation is thrown out against my dear husband how easily *I* take fire, and so with *you*, my dear friend ; if —— is offended, then *you* "burn !" And so it

should be; I do *not like cold-hearted hearers*; I think we should be kindly and warmly affectioned towards the servants of Christ, under whom we receive soul profit; and so I am sure we are, when the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the powerful operations of the Holy Spirit.

Now, I am obliged to look upon my husband as the *instrument* which God was graciously pleased to make use of, to draw my poor benighted soul away from the world, leading me to the means of grace, where God in rich and sovereign mercy was pleased to meet with me. And the instrument too, under whom my soul has been spiritually instructed, comforted, and built up for many years.

Then, under what *great obligations* am I laid unto him; and I feel I cannot but enter into his sorrows, and his joys, rejoicing when he rejoices, and mourning when he mourns. And if any one hurts him I *must lament* it.

But to revert to the subject, and show you *why* we were hurt in our minds last Christmas. My poor husband was well assured that it was next to impossible for him to *stand* here, with such a concern as *that* before him; and I really do believe that the new chapel will hold all the lovers of truth in Leicester, —if we except Mr. C——'s people. Then how are three likely to gain attendance! And here are three chapels, professedly of the same faith and order, and very often not a preacher at any of the three, and sometimes one at each place. And where there is a fresh man, *there* the people flock, and the others are very thin.

Now this is the true state of Leicester, as far as I can tell it you, and who can blame a poor man for *fleeing* into *another city*, to see if the Lord will be graciously pleased to open him a door somewhere else; plainly seeing that if he stayed here, he must either *involve* the *people* in *debt*, or *bring his family to want*, neither of which he was willing to do. And having his hands set to the plough, he dares not look back, yet does not know whether or not he will be *allowed standing room anywhere*.

O, depend upon it, my dear friends, no man in his com-

mon senses would *bring himself* into such a dilemma, if he could help it. It is a *trying* place,

"But in deepest straits, if He appear,
Our dawning is begun."

And it is remarkable, that the morning after my husband had given up here, there came an invitation for him to supply for a few Sabbaths at S——. This kind interposition in divine providence, led us to hope that He, who could appear in *such* a time of *need*, could also *appear unto the end*, and open up a way for us in the desert.

O, to be a *stranger* and a *pilgrim* on the earth, is *not* to live a life of *ease*! Yet sometimes when I read the 11th chapter to the Hebrews, I feel such divine content, and I can bless the Lord that we are in the beaten track which leads to his right hand.

I think it will *not be for long*,—

"A few more rolling suns at most,
Will land us safe on Canaan's coast."

O, to have a good hope beyond the grave, sweetens the bitters in our cup; it is an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, &c. &c.

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, to her Husband.

Leicester, October 1841.

MY VERY DEAR HUSBAND,

. . . . I am *very much* concerned about you, but I hope the Lord will appear for you in this, as well as in every other change.

We have none but the Lord to trust in, but, alas! I sometimes feel so full of unbelief, that I cannot trust Him as I would; and then the enemy harasses me sore; he spreads before me *all the troubles* of the way, in such a gloomy light, and tells me that my journey will be dark to the end. But yesterday these words came to my mind with some comfort—

“Though dark be my way,
Since He is my guide,
'Tis mine to obey,
'Tis his to provide.”

And this morning my soul has been supported by this passage, “Let him that walketh in darkness and hath no light, trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God.” I desire to receive the *admonition*, and to walk under its influence.

I always find it best for me—when *God gives me strength*—to cast myself and all that pertains to me at his feet, and *let Him do as seemeth Him good*. Perhaps He has sent our present trials that *patience* may have her perfect work in us, and if so, the more we are enabled to *lie submissive*, the sooner we may hope for deliverance.

I feel extremely obliged to Mr. and Mrs. H——, for their great kindness to you; the account drew tears of thankfulness to God, for raising up such kind friends for you; and when I had read the letter I knelt down with my dear children to thank the Lord for it, and to beg of Him to bless them in their basket and store, reminding Him of his own most gracious promise, that a “*cup of cold water* given to a disciple in the name of a disciple, shall *not* lose its *reward*.” I besought Him to verify his word in their soul’s experience, and to make the kind providence which had brought you together, a mutual and a lasting blessing, by cementing you in Christian friendship.

I hope the Lord may be graciously pleased to give you a good day on the coming Sabbath, that by the anointings of the Holy Ghost, you may find a *sacred entrance* into his blessed word, and be enabled, as an instrument in his hand, to feed the flock of God, which He has purchased with his blood. It is my earnest prayer that you may feel Christ *present* in your assembly, that it may be a season of refreshing to your souls.

As for myself, I am in a barren soil; I cannot feel that soul nourishment from reading meetings which I have oftentimes been favoured to enjoy under the preached word, and which my soul hankers after.

On —— I heard, but I could not set my seal to what

he advanced ; it appeared to me a mass of words calculated to bolster up such as have no religion, and to leave the family of God to starve. It was neither preaching the word, nor Christian experience ; and for myself, I can derive no benefit from such preaching.

The dear children eagerly long to see you. Believe me as ever, in the bonds of nature and of grace, your ever loving and most affectionate wife,

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his Wife.*

1841.

. . . . I THINK you should not give way to uneasiness and to overwhelming fears. Do not alarm yourself and the children ! we have no one to trust in but that God, who *has fed us all our life long*. May He *help* us to call upon Him, and at length, in mercy, break through every cloud that veils and darkens his designs.

What I most need is, God's leading, keeping, special guidance and protection ; for this I try to pray.

I could not seek an interview with. . . . Surely I could not expect a blessing in trusting in, or attempting to conciliate.

I think my life is approaching a *solemn crisis*. I am in great trouble, yet more *in peace* than you would expect under all the circumstances. I hope God will speak peace to *your soul* while you are reading this letter, and that He will strengthen you to remember me in your prayers.

May He guide us with his eye, instruct us in the way we should go, and *make a way* for us.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

Leicester, October 1841.

. . . . I TRY to pray for you and commit you, myself, and our dear children into the Lord's hands, and *watch*

and *wait* for his appearing ; but sometimes I feel discouraged and cast down, and am ready to say, " Will the Lord be favourable no more ? hath He in anger shut up his tender mercies ? " But this is my *infirmity*, and I have to pray for pardon.

May the Lord give *me* resignation to his divine will, and may you be indulged with *nearness of access* to Him, and find strength equal to your day. We are often very low, having no one to speak to (on our affairs), yet we have *much* to be truly thankful for, in that we have a *shelter* and *food* to eat ; I desire to esteem these things as *great* mercies, for I am sure I do not deserve them.

But, without *you*, I cannot enjoy the comforts of *home*. I often try to bring my mind down to my circumstances, and to content myself with everything just as the *Lord* sees good to dispose it, but this is a lesson which I have not been *able fully to attain unto* ; still, now and then, the Lord *brings me to it* for a little while, and I find it *sweet to lie submissive* at his feet.

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, to her Husband.

Leicester, October 1841.

I NEED not tell you, my very dear husband, that we shall all be very glad to see you. I assure you these *long* and frequent *separations* are *very* painful to me, and the poor children ; but I desire to be *patient* under the hand of God, though alas, I do not always find it *easy* work.

This month I have been dark in my soul, and faith and hope have been faint and low, but He has promised to give *power to the faint*, and to increase the strength of them who have no might. I found a little refreshment this morning whilst dear little E—— was reading the thirty-seventh Psalm before prayer ; and I found a *sweet season* in supplication, for which I desire to be thankful, and receive as a token for good.

I was yesterday much cast down and harassed by the

enemy, who would fain have persuaded me to give up *all hope* of ever being *settled* again with the object of my fondest solicitude: and he pictured such gloomy things to me, as kept me awake the greater part of the night. But blessed be the Lord, the *Sun* of righteousness again *dawned* on my *soul* this morning, inspiring me with hope and trust in the Lord, who waiteth to be gracious to his poor, tried, believing people, until the *set time* for their deliverance is come. O, may He give me grace to wait that time with patience and resignation!

We heard from dear J—— yesterday; he sent a loving letter to his three little brothers, exhorting them to be good boys while you are absent. I feel *greatly comforted* in him, he shows so much good sense, *filial affection*, and brotherly love; he desires his kind love to you, and the dear boy has returned ~~the~~ half sovereign to me, as he says Mr. H—— has paid him. . . .

I feel very deeply concerned for you, respecting what lies before you I hope the Lord will be with you, to *guide* and *direct* you; and that He may be graciously pleased to grant his presence that *everything* you may have to *say* or *do*, may be under the blessed sanction, Divine leading, and sacred teaching of the Holy Spirit.

I hope I shall be *enabled* to look to the Lord by prayer and supplication, for his blessing upon you; you are ever in my thoughts, and *your* troubles are *mine*. Our dear children are all well.

Your ever loving wife,
And companion in tribulation,
MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend*.

London, November 1841.

I MUST thank you for the letter which I have received from you this day. It was full of comfort, and many things contained in it exactly correspond with my own

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his Wife.*

November 1841.

. . . . I LONG to hear from you, and to know how you all are.

. . . . I have told you all I know of —. One of the members at S—— chapel told me that the opposition *there* was very strong, that they divided the house (as in the Commons), that the *minority* was composed chiefly of the *respectable* members, and they were resolute in opposing,—preferring *greatly* to me, another minister as a supply.

I do not think that I have much more to do at S—— chapel ; and I have been fearful that ere long I shall be cast out of London ; the Lord only knows.

I certainly have been *almost distracted* with trouble, and have had as yet no deliverance ; but I believe I have *no guilt* on my conscience, and am often crying to the Lord to appear. He never has forsaken us, and I desire to say, “ Though he slay me, yet *will* I *trust* in him.” If I am somewhat *faint* in the way, yet I am waiting for *waiting strength*.

Though I cannot fall sensibly into his arms, I am *fallen at his feet*, and I hope He will never leave nor forsake me.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

Leicester, November 1841.

. . . . RESPECTING it is what *I expected*, therefore I am not disappointed. I sincerely hope you will be divinely helped to take it in a Christian spirit.

I feel very much for you ; my ardent desire before God is, that as you have need at this time of *great* grace, He may be graciously pleased to impart it to you under present trials, and that He may keep you in all your ways, and that *every action* of your life may speak forth praises

of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

If I might advise you I should be very cautious how I accepted an invitation, even for a few weeks, at S——, if they are so opposed to it; for we always see, that if the *rich* and *powerful* are *against* a measure, it generally *fails*.

But indeed I dare say you know not *what* to do for the *best*. I am sure I feel at times almost at my *wits' end*.

O, may the Lord appear for us and hold us up, and *bring us through*. Do send me a line by return of post, to say how you are, and how you get on. May the Lord bless you, and appear for you. The children are *very anxious* about their dear father.

Your ever faithful and loving wife,
At all times and seasons,

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, to her Husband.

Leicester, December 1841.

. . . . I CAN assure you as a faithful wife, I make it my study, even as it is my interest, to be as *careful* as I can, and to do my very best in my family, endeavouring to keep order and discipline amongst my children as far as I am able; and daily to spread out our case as a family before God, imploring Him to undertake for us, and meanwhile to keep us *patiently* waiting for *his* appearing.

Is yours, my dear husband, a tried path?—so is mine—in these things we have to suffer with each other. God has laid upon my soul a deep concern for the success of your *ministry*, and for your welfare as a man, therefore you cannot be in trouble (if I know it), but I must feel it also. And I may add, that while I am on this side the grave, I desire to be a partaker of *all your sorrows*.

And although our path has been through much tribulation, yet at this moment I have a sweet persuasion in my soul, that it is the *right path*, however painful to flesh

and blood, and I have a hope that it will lead us to a city of habitation, whose builder and maker is God.

My earnest prayer for you, my dear husband, is, that He who is the Shepherd of Israel, and who leads Joseph like a flock, may shine into your soul, and favour you frequently to realize your *union unto Him*. May He abundantly bless you in your public ministrations, stand by you, strengthen you, and uphold you by the right hand of his power; and so clothe the message which He gives you with his own *Almighty power*, that it may be received into the *hearts* of his people in the love of it, and bring forth *fruit* an hundredfold to his honour and glory.

I shall be glad to hear how you are helped through this day, for though absent in body, I am *present* with you in Spirit. . . .

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his Wife*.

December 1841.

. . . . I RECEIVED on Wednesday evening a severe letter from Mr. —, the *most severe* letter I ever received from *any man*.

I should not have mentioned it now to you, but to break the ice before I show it to you (as I intend, if spared, to do). Let not this *distress* you. Lord, what is man—poor feeble man?

I am rather *comfortable* this day. David encouraged himself in the Lord his God. Yesterday I spoke from those words, which you know as well as I—Acts xx. 23, 24.

The Lord brought me through, although it was a sorrowful trying day.

The best news of an earthly nature which I have to relate is, that the friends, who desire the *bringing over* my family, begin rather to *increase* in number; several have expressed *sympathy* for you in our *separation*, and I have *now* some hopes of our mutual desire being ere long

realized—to *dwell once more under one roof*. May the Lord direct and strengthen us to pray, and fulfil it to the letter.*

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend*.

Leicester, December 1841.

I REMEMBER a time when I was in communion with you at John-street, these words were powerfully impressed on my mind for several weeks—"Now abideth these three—faith, hope, charity." I was led to meditate upon them; I entered a little into their import; they were very sweet and precious to me; and the soul-comforting lesson which I learned from them was of signal use to me afterwards.

It was not very long before I was brought into heavy trials, such as my soul had never known before,—crosses, afflictions and bereavements came upon me; for a while I bore up under them, but at length the little *divine strength* which had been communicated to me appeared to be withheld, and for a time I sunk into a state of despondency,—darkness encompassed my soul.

I fretted at the hand of God, and in that dark and cloudy day, the enemy besieged my soul to rob me of my hope in Christ. I sometimes greatly feared he would *prevail* against me. But adored be the name of the Lord, who does, with every temptation, make a way of escape for his poor afflicted children, He again dawned upon my soul, led me to consider his former mercies, brought to my remembrance the time I have referred to, when, by his sacred teaching, I was led to see that when the Holy Spirit quickened my soul, He implanted those three divine principles there, and that they would *abide*, until faith and hope were lost in the full fruition of love everlasting!

This lesson was again indelibly stamped upon my mind, and hope revived in my soul; I could then look back upon all the way which the Lord had led me in the wilderness, and *bless Him for every step*.

* This desire was realized Feb. 3, 1842, after a separation of eight months.

He brought to my remembrance the time when He first called me out of darkness into his marvellous light ; He made me see my calling, and helped me to believe that I should hold on my way, teaching me that He never repents of the grace that He gives, but that He *will give more grace*. O, my soul, take courage in the Lord !

You complain that you are so destitute of sensible comforts, that you seem to need a naked faith to trust a naked Saviour. There is such a thing, depend upon it, and Job had it when he said, " I know that my Redeemer liveth." And though we are *in and of ourselves* such *helpless* creatures, that we can no more draw *faith* into *exercise than we can make a world*, yet God the Holy Spirit can bring it into lively exercise in our souls ; and *He has engaged to do it*. Be it, then, your part and mine to put Him in remembrance.

That scripture which came to your mind whilst writing to me, is very suitable admonition to both of us—viz.—" If any man lack wisdom," &c., for this is a part of true wisdom, to be enabled to put our *trust* in God, *whatever* betide. For, depend upon it, his love is deeper than our miseries are, and greater than our sins ; and He will bring us up *out of every* trouble to praise his name, for, " Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy." . . .

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

CHAPTER XXX.

[1842.]

LONDON—PREACHES AT SOHO CHAPEL—WELWYN—GOWER-STREET—SOHO—ZOAR CHAPEL, AND GOWER-STREET—JANUARY, 1842, AT ELY—AT MARCH—INVITED FOR SIX MONTHS TO GOWER-STREET—WIFE AND CHILDREN BROUGHT FROM LEICESTER TO LONDON, FEBRUARY, 1842—HEALTH OF WIFE BREAKING UP—LETTERS—HER ILLNESS AND DEATH—"ACCOUNT OF MRS. BLACKSTOCK BY HER BEREAVED HUSBAND"—LETTERS.

I WENT to London (as stated before) in May, 1841. I had spent seven sabbaths at Soho chapel, two (in July) at Welwyn, Herts—August and September at Gower-street—October at Soho chapel—November at Zoar chapel, Great Ailie-street—December at Gower-street—January, 1842, at Ely—and at March.

Having received an invitation for *six months* from the Gower-street Church, and obtained the consent of three of the deacons, I set off to Leicester to bring over my family.

I had then been separated from them during a period of almost *eight months*; and meeting my dear wife after this long absence, I was *greatly shocked* to perceive how evidently her health was breaking under a complication of disorders.

MRS. BLACKSTOCK, *to her Husband.*

. . . . I KNOW that God has not taught you to shun to declare the whole counsel of God, as many do, with whom the *offence* of the cross has *ceased*. . . .

You seem to be under the impression that the food which your soul loves is not the *favourite* food of some; perhaps this is the case; but what can you do in it? The husbandman that laboureth must be *first* a partaker of the fruits, and you as an instrument can only feed the flock with the same bread of heaven with which God feeds you. . . .

Mr. ——'s work hangs on too many *contingencies*, and his preaching appears to me, to lack that "OFFENCE of the CROSS" which generally marks the testimony of the Lord's *tried witnesses*; still, I must confess that he is simple and experimental.

On —— he preached from the words of Paul. . . . I cannot say that I felt any *power* attend his ministry to my own soul, although I could set my seal to what he said in general; yet there is a short-coming in discriminating points, which I never like to hear.

My soul seems lifted up when I see a soldier of the cross—regardless of consequence—brandish the *sword* of the SPIRIT, and cut against errors on the right and on the left. I am persuaded there is no setting up the naked truth of the Gospel without it.

It is my earnest desire, my dear husband, that the Lord would ever make and keep you faithful in *all* points, that, when He shall see good to call you from your labours, you may, with a good conscience, be able to say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." . . .

MARIA BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend*.

London, February 1842.

My dear wife has had a *serious cough* all the winter; she was very poorly when she left Leicester, but is considerably improved since she came to London, though she has still frequent cough and expectoration. I can assure you she

feels very warmly towards you, and wishes me to present her very kindest love to you, and to Mr. and Mrs. H—— Very strong attempts have been made to get me removed from Gower-street, and the representations circulated have not failed to make *considerable impression* on the minds of *some*. But still, things appear quite as well as (if not better than) we might have expected ; and even during the last three Sabbaths many say that they have heard *well*.

A goodly number of them seem very friendly to my wife, and I do think I have not seen her so much at home for some time, as she appears to be with several of the people, and this I rather wonder at, as she is by no means fond of London. *What* I am come *here for* I cannot tell—I know that “in every city bonds and afflictions abide me.” I only wish that I might be *filled* with the *same spirit* that animated Paul, and that the word from my stammering lips might be attended with the same “*excellency of power*.”

My wife promises to be an illustration of that singular promise—“I will bring the blind,” &c.—

“ Though dark be my way,
Since He is my guide,
'Tis mine to obey,
'Tis his to provide.

“ When cisterns are broken,
And creatures all fail,
The word He has spoken,
Shall surely prevail.”

I feel deeply my own unfitness for such an undertaking as this is, and I have a great desire to *serve the Lord*, and the people of God here, with my *whole heart*, and with my *whole soul*. O God, what am I, and what is my Father's house, that thou shouldest have brought me hitherto? Is this the manner of men, O Lord?

I have now and then a sweet refreshing season in the pulpit, but I find myself a leaky vessel. Yet at times my soul fervently longs for *communion with Jesus*. I hope He will appear for me, and make his strength perfect

in my weakness. Salvation, in all its branches and fruits, is *wholly of the Lord* ; of this I am a living witness.

For many years I have had no honey to sweeten the cup of life withal, but what has been derived from the gracious *manifested presence* of my Redeemer. The want of that privilege casts a deathlike damp upon *all earthly* enjoyments. Life is scarcely tolerable without the *Sun of Righteousness*. Still, I hold Christ to be my unchanging, never-failing *friend*. "Cast not away your confidence," saith blessed Paul, "which hath great recompence of reward."

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend (now deceased)*.

London, 1st September, 1842.

My dear wife is very *much worse* than when you saw her. She lies in bed or on a couch day and night, and tells me she believes that her *days* on earth are *numbered*.

She is in a very comfortable state of mind, and even *rejoices* in the hope of the glory of God ! So here again are mercies mingled with judgments. . . .

The opposition appears strong, and what the *will* of God is in it, I know not. I endeavour to cast my soul and my concerns upon Him, of whom it is said, and who has before now applied the words with a *living power* to my heart—"He careth for you !" O, my brother, it is hard ; I find and feel in the dark, and exercised on all hands, to *trust* in the name of the Lord ! May He give me grace to cast my burden upon Him, for it is much too *heavy* for me to bear ; and may He help me to be still, and know that He is God.

God knows, I have been a man of many trials, and many sorrows ; but few things have gone to my heart like the *opposition* of God's ministers, and of God's children. But I have often prayed to my God that He would lay no more upon me than He would enable me to bear.

Hitherto He has just *made a way*, and I do hope and

trust and pray, that He will never leave me nor forsake me; and O may He never suffer me to *leave Him*, for He is my best and only friend. When in trouble—

“He near my soul has often stood;
His loving-kindness, O how good!”

But, my brother, I find that I am called to walk the 'arkest paths *alone*. Many thanks to thee for thy brotherly kindness. Peace be with thee.

Yours, very affectionately,

EDWARD BLACKSTOCK.

[The preceding letter was written in September. In October Mrs. Blackstock became rapidly worse, but Mr. Blackstock did not apprehend immediate danger, and having been invited to preach at Devonport, (during the period that he was not required at Gower-street chapel,) he was induced by the *urgent* solicitations of his wife to go there. The following accounts were sent to him by his family.]

MY DEAR FATHER,

London, October 11th, 1842.

We were glad to hear of your safe arrival. My dear mother seems much improved since you left; her new medicine appears to have done her good. . . . Her feet are still much swollen, and she is *very* weak. . . .

She sends her kind love to you, and hopes you will not be uneasy about her, as she is “*very comfortable in all respects.*”

Oct. 15.—My dearest mother has become much worse. She *changes* so often, that we are in *constant fear*.

She told me to give her *never ceasing love to you*, and to tell you that there are “*bands*” in her death.

Her sufferings are *very great*. It is heart-breaking to see her lie in that state, without the power of rendering

her the smallest relief ; her mouth and tongue are very sore.

She seems desirous to *depart*, and talks very much of *you*, and of Joseph, when she is able to speak.

We expect Mr. Abrahams to-day. My dear mother sent for him, to thank him and Mrs. Abrahams for all their kindness.

I intend to write to you every day, in the hope of relieving your anxiety. It is a *double affliction* to us that you are absent.

October 16.—I write this to let you know that my dear mother is *much worse*, faintness, and death-like chills continually come over her. But she is still *very comfortable* in her mind, and often *longing* to be *gone*.

I asked her, if I should send for you, but she said, you were about your Master's work, and *that* must on no account be neglected.

My dear father, it is very trying to *me*, to have to send such news to *you*, but it is the opinion of our friends, that my dear mother is *near* her end, yet her *mind* is as *strong* as *ever*.

My dear mother was repeating one day, "He is my Redeemer, my *blessed* Redeemer," and turning to me she said, "Hannah, Remember *now* thy Creator in the days of *thy youth*, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

"Seek the Lord while He may be found,—those who live without God in the world, are wretched,—I have known Him many years, and He has *never failed*, nor *forsaken me* !"

She told me that I must never indulge one *wish* for her *recovery*, for it was cruel,—that she wanted to be gone, to be for ever with her blessed Lord, and all his holy angels, and her dear children who were gone before her.

"Yes," she said, "an *innumerable* company which no man can number. I die, my Hannah, but I hope the Lord will take care of *you*, and the rest of my *dear* children, and put his grace into your hearts, and then we shall meet again in Heaven and be a happy family. Sometimes

the Lord takes *one* of a family, and sometimes He takes a *whole* family, as He called Lazarus, and Martha, and Mary; but *I* was '*one* of a family,' called by sovereign grace."

At another time, she said, "I love *all* God's people, He has taken away all my feelings of *bigotry* and bitterness. I feel no enmity to any soul on earth, I love *ALL* God's children without distinction."

At one time my dear mother thought she was going, but she revived again, which seemed to be a great *grief* to her. She prayed much to be gone, saying, "Come, Lord Jesus, take thy suffering handmaid to thyself; but O, give me *patience* to wait thy time!"

Tuesday, October 18th, 1842.—My beloved mother has just departed; her happy spirit has winged its flight to a better world,—sensible to the last.

She breathed her *last* ten minutes before four o'clock this afternoon.

Mrs. B——y, and ——, and ——, were all with us, and witnessed the solemn scene.

Your loving daughter,

HANNAH BLACKSTOCK.

P.S.—The friends here are passing kind to us all.

From the same, to a Friend.

London, October 1842.

. . . . My beloved mother *departed this life* about four o'clock on Tuesday afternoon, without *sigh*, groan, or struggle.

I was with her all the last night (with two friends). She altered very much. I stood over her, wiping her dear mouth, until she was *no more*.

The last words she was heard to utter, were, "O, to be dissolved, and be with Christ!" and then she whispered, "*MY REDEEMER!*" We could hear nothing more, but her dear lips moved in prayer.

Her bodily sufferings had been *very great*. She told those around her some days previous to her death, that there were “bands in her death,” that the grasshopper was a burden. But she would add, “It is a part of the sufferings of Christ, which the church and his people must pass through,”—a “partaker of Christ’s sufferings.” “He drank the cup to the dregs, and his people must taste it too.”

On Saturday night she had a very *severe* conflict, also part of the Sunday, but her confidence remained *unshaken*; and on Sunday evening she again became very happy in her mind.

She told the friends that Satan had tried to shake her confidence, but that the Lord had not suffered him to do so.

Many who came to see her were *astonished* at her conversation. My dear father himself used to be surprised at her; and I believe that from the *happy* state of her mind, he received the impression that she would be *taken from us*.

When the solemn event occurred, he was absent from home; he had intended to decline going to Devonport, but my dear mother would not suffer him to *remain with her*; she told him, that he had his Master’s work to do, and that he must not neglect *that* on *any account*.

My dear mother left every necessary direction concerning her funeral. . . .

HANNAH BLACKSTOCK.

From the Letter of a Friend.

. . . . A FEW days previous to the death of my dear friend, Mrs. Blackstock, Mrs. N——, and I went to visit her; and on going to her bedside, in reply to my inquiries, she said, “Waiting, waiting for my Lord’s coming! O, it will not be long ere I shall *see Him*, and spend an eternity with Him!—Yes,—mercy shall be built up *for ever*,—yes—

for ever.—And although the Lord may suffer the enemy to try me,—and I may have a *sore* conflict,—and my intellects may fail,—through extreme weakness,—yet *this* will not *alter* the state of my soul ;—flesh is flesh, and is *weak*, and can bear no more than God strengthens it to bear,—but the spirit is spirit,—and my Jesus hath made with *me* an *everlasting covenant*. Yes—everlasting—everlasting.”

She repeated this *three* times with much energy, then addressing herself to my sister, she earnestly exhorted her to *seek* the Lord, saying, there was nothing else *worth* seeking.

She spoke admirably of the *discriminating grace* of God in calling *her*, when she knew not another of her family so favoured.

This meeting, both my sister and I felt to be *very* affecting and *solemn*.

I sat up with her one night to relieve the others ; it was nearly her last on earth. She had a *sore conflict* with Satan, in which he tempted her to put an end to her existence ; but the Lord, she said, had overcome him, and enabled her to resist his fiery darts.

After this, she spoke of a *sweet vision* which she had had, of the *glory* which awaited her. She said the curtain had been drawn back, and she had seen the *blessed company* that she should ere long join.

Her longings for dismissal were so intense, that she was compelled at last to pray for *patience* to wait the Lord's time.

She spoke of the friends at Gower-street, and said she died in sweet *union* with them.* She expressed a desire to partake of the Lord's Supper with Mr. Abrahams, (and such friends as might like to join them,) as a last proof that she loved *all* the *Lord's family*, and that baptism was no barrier to *union*.

Mr. Abrahams visited her more than once, and expressed great satisfaction in communing with her. He also attended her funeral.

* Many of those friends alluded to by Mrs. B. have since joined her spirit in glory.

Her death was a great grief to many. She was a *precious* Christian, and a blessed helpmeet to our pastor.

&c. &c.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to a Friend.*

1842.

. . . . My dear-wife had been very *highly* favoured in her soul under the means, since we came to London. For the last three months she had been unable to attend, but the Lord has so *visited* and favoured her, that I never witnessed such a case before!

I could not have questioned her interest in Christ, even if she had not been favoured latterly; but still I consider it to be the *most glorious thing* that ever happened in my family, that the Lord should so *sweetly visit* and *comfort* her in her last illness.

She died triumphantly! having for weeks delivered such a testimony to the honour of her dear Saviour, before many Christian friends who came to see her, as will not be forgotten by *them* whilst *they live*. . . .

Had my dear Maria lived until the 5th of November, she would have been forty-eight years of age. I am sure she is now singing in glory, Halleluia!

Truly she is one of those who have "come out of *great* tribulation," and I am left in the wilderness! Mine is indeed a *great* loss. But she is a gainer! I cannot wish her back.

My dear children are all very sorrowful, but pretty well, excepting Hannah, who is very poorly, though she seems much supported.

Dear little Mary Ann, when she saw her dear mother after death, said, "Mother does *not cough*;" she cried much, and said, she was sure her heart would break.

Writing on this subject has opened my wounds afresh; for grace to follow her!

“How bless'd is our sister, bereft
Of all that could burden her mind;
How easy the soul that has left
This wearisome body behind.”

My dear friend, farewell. Peace be with you all.

E. BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, to a *Friend*.

October 1842.

. . . . I CONSIDER the Lord's kindness to my dear Maria in her last illness, the *crowning mercy of our lives!* and I desire with all my heart and soul to *adore* the God of my salvation. Bless the Lord, O my soul!

Her *spirit* is still with me, she seems to beckon me away from transitory things, and I do *long* to join my *dear sister*, (for she is no longer my wife,) in heaven.

O, may grace prepare my heart to follow her, and may *my* last end be everlasting peace.

I was induced to write you these few lines, because you were brought to my remembrance as one of those for whom she had a particular affection. I have often heard her speak of her union to you, and I thought I ought to write a few lines, *sacred* to her *memory*. And may the blessed Spirit shed a rich fragrance upon our hearts, by means of this *testimony*, that you may feel towards her as I feel. The memory of the just is blessed!

She has now done with poverty, shame, reproach, and sin, for ever.

Pray for me. Will you give my love to your husband, and to ———

Your sincere friend in an unalterable bond of union.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

Extract from the Letter of a Friend, (since deceased.)

. . . . I WAS favoured to watch the dying bed, and to close the eyes of a *good wife*, and *good mother*, and a use-

ful member of the church of Christ. I did not consider this a calamity, but a *trial*.

The Lord in his holy providence brought her by *decline* to the bank of the river, and He led her to *review his dealings* with herself and family ; and gave her grace to *declare* his goodness to all around her. And in the presence of her children, and some favoured Christian friends, she went *over Jordan*, leaning on the Almighty arm of a covenant God.

Our dear deceased sister, Mrs. Blackstock, declared on her dying bed, that she had not enjoyed such liberty and peace for several years, as she felt after joining our *communion* at Gower-street.

Her words were, "Remember, I am now going to heaven, *one in spirit with every one* who worships God *in the Spirit*, without any distinction or *distinctions*."

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF MRS. BLACKSTOCK, WRITTEN
BY HER BEREAVED HUSBAND.

My dear wife was born in the town of Manchester, of infidel parents. She was not twenty years of age when we were married ; and being, like myself, a DEIST, she had seldom gone to a place of worship, and although a person of good natural understanding, she was almost as ignorant of Divine things as a heathen.

She had been preserved from all immorality, but her mind was disposed to the love of worldly pleasure ; and everything in the shape of religion was not only *distasteful*, but it afforded a subject for *ridicule*,—both of us, in those days of awful blindness, uniting together to scoff at religious professors of every grade.

And so great was the *enmity* of our hearts to the semblance of religion, that *nothing* but *Almighty power* could have brought *either* of us to make any such profession.

My wife had no reverence for the Bible, and did *not* in *any sense* believe it.

At the time when the Lord suddenly and powerfully called me by his grace, she was present, and had she understood, must have been witness to the Lord's *first* awful arrow of *conviction* being shot into my conscience.

What He had once begun, he carried on in my soul. My wife remarked the change effected in me, for it was striking, but it only excited her to deride and contemn. For a time she was much inclined to *persecute*, yet a strong feeling would often force itself upon her, that there was a *reality* in religion, and that I was on the right road, and she on the wrong.

The blessed Lord, whose ways are a mighty deep, and whose mercy has no bounds as it regards his own people, enabled me to bear her taunts with patience, and with a quiet spirit.

A mighty soul travail was laid upon me for my dear wife, and I was often led out in fervent prayer for the salvation of her soul. Finally, I so far prevailed over her prejudices, that she was persuaded to sit down while I read a chapter of the sacred word; and with solemn fear and trembling, I warned her of her dreadful state, and reasoned of righteousness and of judgment to come, telling her of the desperate depravity of man in the fall, and of the necessity of the new birth.

The Lord mercifully *opened* her eyes, her ears, and her heart, so that she gradually fell under conviction of her lost estate, and would kneel down with me while I prayed with, and for her. She afterwards was persuaded to go and hear a godly man, Mr. W. Roby, who was pastor of an Independent church. Under his ministry the Lord brought her solemnly to receive the whole contents of the sacred word, as being *infallibly true*. He carried on a work of gradual but effectual conviction in her heart, brought her upon her knees, and taught and constrained her to seek earnestly *that* mercy which she had hitherto scorned.

He quickened her to spiritual desires, and began to *reveal* unto her soul the *Incarnate mystery*. In the course of time, the Lord raised her to hope in his precious name; and led me often to examine her, and to watch over her

with the tenderest care. Finally, He gave her a deep and feeling insight into the pollution of her nature, and into the baseness of her former infidelity; and brought her down to a very *low* point.

Then, under the preaching of Mr. Roby, the blessed Lord Jesus was pleased to *reveal Himself* to her in righteousness, and *atoning blood*; He gave her sweet peace in believing, and much brokenness of heart and contrition of soul.

I remember the first time that she was favoured, whilst under the word, to receive joy and peace; on reaching home, in a very *softened* frame of spirit, and with a sweet and blessed *energy*, she exclaimed —“I *know* whom I have believed, and am *persuaded* that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” These words at that time also were very sweet and blessed to her,—“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” The *power* of God which accompanied this passage reached her inmost soul! I never heard any one speak of those precious words as she did.

Now she began to taste the sweetness of *communion with God in Christ*, and her heart at times seemed in a flame of love to the Lord Jesus.

She was blessedly touched with *compunction*, and sprinkled with atoning blood; and through grace, became one of the *warmest-hearted* Christians that I ever knew.

After this, she began to attend my ministry, and I have often thought that no one ever drank so deeply into the best parts of it as she did.

My dear wife eventually became the mother of *thirteen* children, and had therefore full experience of family troubles; and I may truly say, that both internally and externally, she was *well tried*. Many an anxious hour did she and I pass, and many a *stormy sea* did we wade through together.

She had at times seasons of darkness, and not a few sharp and sore temptations, but out of *all* these the Lord

graciously delivered her. In her earlier days doubts and fears harassed her mind occasionally, but she was led to carry them to the Lord; and may his holy name be praised, He took them all away in his own good time.

By grace, she was well set down in the truth of God, and was often blessed with a sweet trust and confidence in Him, and often established in peace of soul. But she came not *lightly* into that blessed confidence and happy establishment, which was conspicuous in her last days; she passed through *more* afflictions of *almost every kind*, than I remember to have witnessed in man or woman.

She well knew the awful sinfulness of her heart, and desired that no one might exalt the creature, but only the grace of God in him. I have often heard her speak in a manner that did my soul good, upon these words, "*Mercy shall be built up for ever.*"

That my dear wife was *perfection* in the flesh, I will not assert. She had her infirmities,—a somewhat quick temper, and on this account the Lord would at times so break down her spirit, that I have often seen her like Mary, *weeping at the Master's feet.*

From the time that God called her, she was preserved by Him from falling, and I never met with any one more sensible of the mercy, or more thankful for it.

Her favourite themes were the Incarnate mystery—the finished work of Christ—the sovereignty and aboundings of her Father's love and grace—the riches of mercy—the blessedness of a lively trust in the Lord, and a hope full of immortality. But the Lord kept the best wine for the last. After passing through floods and flames, her gracious God was pleased to work wonders for her. From the last six or seven months of our coming to London, her disorder—which was *asthma*—brought her into a declining state, and her sufferings towards the last were *very severe*, but her consolation abounded by Christ.

Her comforts were strong and solid. She was often raised *far* above this world, and often seemed to dwell in the suburbs of heaven. Her heart appeared to glow with divine love, and He who had *kindled* the sacred flame

there, opened her mouth to speak forth the high praises of her Redeemer.

She seemed to delight in praising and blessing his holy name; and so ardent were her longings to be for ever with Him, that it almost amounted to impatience,—“Why tarry the wheels of his chariot!—Come, my dearest Jesus,—come quickly!—Come and fetch *home* thy *spouse*!” In these strains my dear wife would break out; and often in the night sing,—“Halleluia!—He is my God—my rock—my refuge—my salvation, and my high tower!”——

Frequently, she would expatiate in a most striking manner, upon the *blessed Trinity*, and their joint work in the salvation of her poor soul. At other times, she would say, “There is not a cloud between my Saviour and my soul!” and with a holy energy exclaim, “Jesus is mine!—He is my shepherd—my brother born for adversity—my friend and my husband.

“The ties of nature are loosed!—Jesus is *all* in *all* to me!—Yes,—I shall soon be with Him—I shall walk in white, and carry a palm of victory!”

A few days before her departure, the enemy was permitted to assault her soul—to tempt her to impatience, and even to hasten her dismissal by taking away her own life! But from this *dreadful trial* the Lord soon and sweetly delivered her; and after this, she spoke of the goodness and mercy of God to her soul, in a manner that cannot be given in language.

Some of her last words were, “Come—come, my Redeemer!—O to be dissolved and be with Christ!”——

She attained what she so ardently longed for; this dear child of God fell asleep in her Beloved.——

I will here give an extract from the letter of a friend, who was with my dear wife twelve days previous to her death. I had just then left town.

“Never did I see a mind *so composed*, so secure in the grasp given her of future things. Although very feeble, she was eager to speak that I might know her happiness. I had seen that life was narrowing, and had expressed

hope, that her anxiety for her family might not try her mind.

"She turned hurriedly towards me—her eyes full of brilliancy—'It is all gone—bless his holy name, I have *no trial—that's all past*. It is all peace—settled peace—solid peace—such a *solid foundation*. O the gracious Lord has shown me infinite mercy—I can leave *everything* to Him. It is *all well* with me!—quite well—nothing but *solid peace* and *everlasting* consolation.'

"Much more she said to the same effect—and kissing her as I came away, she said emphatically—'Trust *Him*, it will be all well with *you*'—(words which I treasured up as *prophetic*.)"

One thing more I would add, she frequently spoke in her last illness of the satisfaction and pleasure it had been to her, to sit down at the Lord's table with her Christian brethren, (for she had joined the church at Gower-street,) and she would add, "I feel so *thankful* that the Lord *opened* my mind to sit down with *all* his children,—whether Baptist or not—before He took me to heaven, where *all the blessed elect family* will have full and *open communion*." She often recurred to this subject, and always as giving her particular satisfaction and peace.

Before her departure, she impressively charged and comforted her dear children, and then solemnly kissed them, and *blessed them* in the name of the Lord.

They have lost a fond mother,—the church on earth, a warm-hearted friend,—and I, a faithful and loving wife.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, to a Friend.

London, 23d October, 1842.

. . . I RETURNED from Devonport on Thursday night, having given up two Sabbaths of my engagement. I feel thankful, my dear friend, for your very kind sympathy and condolence.

I have sustained a *great loss*—a loss which nothing but the *manifested presence* of *Jesus* can replace. But what a mercy it is that God has a remedy which *He can apply* against any of the evils of this life. Bless his holy name! whatever He takes from us, He takes no more than *his own*.

In some moments I feel myself a broken merchant; yet this is a cup *not* without *some sweets*; the *very* blessed way in which my dear Lord *comforted* and established his afflicted handmaid, is sweet matter for praise to all eternity! I never did see any one so *highly favoured*. Bless the Lord, O my soul!

My dear friend, in the days of my youth—after my calling—I travailed as in birth for her.

We passed through twenty-eight summers and winters together. We have together sailed through *many* a storm, but *she* has gained her port. She, like a ship in full sail, has reached her fair haven of eternal rest and peace. O, happy voyager, safe landed at last, on the peaceful shore, where winds never blow, and storms never beat!

Ah, Maria! you are *proving* the sweetness of ineffable blessedness! I envy thee not, but *long* for the blessed moment when thou, with thy fellow-worshippers, shall *welcome me*, a poor worn soldier—when, as a jaded weather-beaten traveller, I shall join your blissful society.

My friend, she is *still with me*—I seem to feel communion with her, as a glorified saint. Her sweet shade seems to hover round, and my spirit follows her, and almost longs for life's termination, when this veil of flesh shall no longer part us. I cannot forbear tears, but they are mingled tears of grief and joy; of grief to have lost a wife—a *great* and *invaluable friend*—but of joy, to feel assured that my great loss is her infinite and eternal gain.

Such a *friend* as she was is rare to find! She is to me like a bird whose beauteous plumage was indistinctly seen until she took her flight. Yet I do not wish to idolize her blessed shade. No! but I feel she is *my sister*, and as a sister-spirit, I long to take her hand, that we might bow

together before the throne—adore *Him* who hath *redeemed* us by his blood, and worship a *triune* Jehovah, for carrying us through a world of woe, and for our safe arrival in our Father's house.

But ah, my friend, *I am* yet in the *wilderness*—these thorns and briers remind me of it; they tear my flesh, and cause my soul to mount and soar away—to the bright hills of endless day.

Another string is cut that bound me to earth, and the tent will fall by-and-by.

May *my last end*, like hers, be everlasting peace! and may this, dear friend, be fully realized by *you also*, that we may rejoice together. . . .

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

CHAPTER XXXI.

[1842.]

LONDON—GOWER-STREET CHAPEL—HOW LED THERE—DOOR OPENED
—DISCOVERS ERROR—CONSIDERS HIMSELF MISLED ON MEANING OF
ORDINANCES—WORK OF SATAN—SEES PRINCIPLE OF EXCLUDING
GOD'S CHILDREN UNSCRIPTURAL—BREAKS BREAD TO CHURCH AT
GOWER-STREET—CHOSEN PASTOR—PEOPLE UNITED—PREACHING
BLESSED TO MANY—EVIL REPORTERS—BAPTISM OF SUFFERINGS—
SUBMISSION—MEMOIR ENDS.

It seems necessary to me that I should at this period explain *why* I consented to break bread to the church in Gower-street chapel.

When I first came there no intention of the sort had ever crossed my mind. But let it be remembered, that I did *not choose* any place, or any people; I committed my way unto the Lord, daily praying that *He* would choose my inheritance for me himself; many heavy trials combined to make me *solemn* and thoughtful.

I was favoured to live much before the throne, and often stole away from human society, that I might call upon God, in whom was *all my trust*, and before whom I could lay my *weighty case*. As far as I can judge of my own heart, I leaned upon *no man*, and the thought of trusting to myself, or to my own understanding, was abhorrent to me.

Three or four openings gave me encouragement, but lest I should take a wrong step, I durst not move in any way, but I unceasingly importuned the Lord

that *He* would *open* that door for me which was right in his sight, and *close* up all beside.

My prayer was heard, for *every* door was closed but that of Gower-street; and although mighty efforts were being made to close that also, they proved ineffectual. I received, as I have already stated, an invitation from the church there for six months; and feeling my great responsibility before God, I laid my case with deep concern at his throne, intreating Him to be my *guide*, and to show me what He would have me to do.

I had at this time procured a pocket Bible, with marginal readings and references, and carrying this with me, I often retired to secluded parts of Hyde Park, where I read a chapter, and then engaged in mental prayer.

One day, when so employed, as I was reading in the 1st Corinthians, the xith chapter, 2d verse—"Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them unto you." I observed a mark against the word *ordinances*, which I had never before seen in any copy of the Scriptures; and that being the *very word* which had before reproved me, I immediately looked in the margin, and to my surprise found the word *traditions*. This startled me, for by tradition I understood a custom—not written, but handed down by word of mouth.

It appeared to me that, in the judgment of the translators, the Greek word might have been rendered traditions, and that they had, therefore, by way of explanation, put this word in the margin. But determining not to yield to the word traditions, I deliberately made up my mind to be ruled entirely by the context, as to whether the Holy Spirit meant baptism and the Lord's Supper, or traditions, in the second verse of the chapter.

Throughout this chapter there is not the slightest allusion to water baptism. And that by "ordinances" (in the second verse), Paul does *not* mean the Lord's Supper, appears to me to be evident, because, instead of praising their manner of attending to the Lord's Supper, he very sharply censures them (verses 20, 21, 22)—"When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not." But from the 27th to the 31st verses he reproves them in an awful manner for the abuses which had crept in amongst them; and as he tells us, that men praying or prophesying in the churches with their heads covered dishonour their head; and that in the churches, women praying or prophesying with their heads uncovered, do the same. From all which it appears to me *clear*, that the apostle was throughout this chapter merely seeking to establish in the church order, and decency of behaviour, amongst the saints, and that he never intended to make any allusion to water baptism.

I therefore came to the conclusion, as an unlearned man, that the context favoured the marginal reading (*traditions*) rather than ordinances; and when fully convinced in my own judgment, I felt at once *unfettered* from what I considered might have been the *work* of the *enemy*, and I fervently entreated the Lord to show me from his word what he would have me to do.

Three scriptures that day were set before my mind: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind"—by which I concluded that a Christian must follow his *own* judgment, without being *bound* to the

judgment of his fellow-Christians, Rom. xiv. 5. "That there should be no *schism* in the body," 1 Cor. xii. 25:—a remark, in my humble opinion, not favouring a *division* of the true church upon water baptism. "Endeavouring to keep the *unity* of the Spirit in the bond of peace," Eph. iv. 3.

Is not Christ the head? and are not the elect the whole church? and is not this church the one *living body of Christ*? Did the Holy Ghost ever *divide* one part of this body from the other? Assuredly not! In this *unity* we were chosen by the Father,—in this unity we were redeemed by the Son—and called by the Holy Ghost; and in this unity Christ will present his church to the Father in the great day; and if we are of the true church, we must *dwell together in unity to all eternity in heaven*.

Then, why this *division* upon *earth*? Is the judgment of a few good men, on water baptism, of more *worth* and *weight* than endeavouring to "keep the *unity* of the Spirit in the bond of peace?" Christ says, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you," John xv. 12. Is this *loving* one another as He has loved us, when we deliberately make laws to *exclude* the brethren of Christ from the Lord's table?

If He does not shut them out from *communion with Himself*, are we justified in shutting them out from communion *with us*? Where is the Scripture which *authorizes* these measures? Deductions and inferences are not satisfactory in a matter of this weight; direct *plain texts* should be shown, before we *divide* asunder the body of Christ. Rom. xv. 17: "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." Has Christ given to a section of his church any laws by which they can fairly reject from their communion any one of those whom

He has received? If He has, may I be favoured to see those laws, and honestly to examine them.

But it is my firm and fixed opinion, that if those men of God, who hold what are termed strict views on baptism, were *carefully* and in an *unprejudiced* manner, to examine *every* text on baptism, they would sooner or later see cause for allowing their brethren more *liberty* of conscience on the subject than they are able to do at present.

Concluding, then, that the *Lord gave me liberty of conscience*, I felt it my duty to break bread to my brethren in Gower-street; so that when the deacons of that church proposed to me to do so, I at once willingly consented.

Let my brethren think of me as they may, I would be very unwilling to *offend my Lord who bought me*, by wilfully or wantonly breaking *his laws*.

After I had supplied Gower-street pulpit for more than ten months, I was chosen pastor there. This measure gave *great offence* to many, and yet I know not *why*, since if the principles of dissent are acknowledged, a church must possess the right of choosing its own pastor; when this *right is denied*, the principles of dissenters at once *fall to the ground*.

I was told of a charge against me of shutting out some good men, who had been in the habit of supplying that pulpit, but nothing could be more unfounded; for, upon the deacons coming to announce their intention of nominating me as pastor, they most distinctly stated that my services at Gower-street chapel would only be required during eight or nine months in the year; and they explained that some good men (whose names they mentioned to me) had been in the habit of supplying a month each for many years. I was fully aware of this, and at once, and, without the slightest hesitation, I consented to the arrangement—

the period fixed for my services being then settled for nine months consecutively.

No impartial judge could pronounce that, in falling into the arrangement offered me by the deacons, *I shut out* any of the supplies which had hitherto been invited. If the truth be told, I consider that the individuals, by their own act, *excluded themselves*, for—unless I was altogether misinformed—they *refused* to preach there any more.

The late pastor of Gower-street, Mr. Fowler, in his last illness, had written down for the deacons the names of certain ministers whom he recommended to them as supplies; *my name* was among that number, and whether or not this circumstance procured me the invitation to supply I cannot say, but this I can with all truth and confidence assert, *I never moved one finger* to procure an invitation, nor, to the best of my knowledge and belief, did I in any way afterwards make the *slightest* movement, or use any endeavours towards obtaining the office of pastor at Gower-street. The Lord had taught me better than this.

Many of the poor—as they have since informed me—were led earnestly to *pray* that, if it were the Lord's will, *I might be brought there*; and they were encouraged to do so, according to their own statements, by passages of scripture which occurred to their minds.

I, on the other hand, not *daring* to choose for myself until the door should be opened for me, had prayed the Lord *to choose* my inheritance; and I was *kept so very low* in spirit, that a much inferior place would have satisfied me. But when the door was undeniably opened, how could I, in the fear of the Lord, venture with my own hands to close it?

If personal *testimony* is to be *believed*, the preached word was more or less *blessed* to hundreds of the people; and, until *cruel* prejudices were industriously

planted, there certainly appeared in that place, generally speaking, a most *united movement* in my *behalf*; and I feel perfectly persuaded that had even Gamaliel's advice been taken, many troubles and sorrows would have been spared. Acts v. 34, 39. "Quench not the Spirit," 1 Thessa. v. 19. This is an exhortation too *lightly* thought of, and men in this our day *too often*, and too *easily* do this work; it is no difficult matter for evil reporters to *raise* the devil, but is by no means *so easy* to *lay* him again!

These strifes have brought me into a baptism of *sufferings*, but the Lord is able to make the whole work together for my good.

I desire to submit to Him, and to say with Job, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." If I am to have Christ, I expect to have the *cross* with Him. If we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him.

May the Lord enable me to *endure* to the *end*. The cross, I own, is bitter, but Christ is sweet and precious to them that believe.

[THE MEMOIR HERE CLOSES.]

CHAPTER XXXII.

MR. BLACKSTOCK'S MEMOIR CONCLUDED—EXPLANATION—PARTICULARS OF SUBSEQUENT EVENTS—QUITS GOWER-STREET—SHATTERED HEALTH—WATFORD—SALEM CHAPEL—SECOND MARRIAGE—LETTERS FROM MR. BLACKSTOCK TO FRIENDS IN 1843-1852.

MR. BLACKSTOCK ceased writing during the period when he was officiating as pastor over the flock of the late excellent Mr. Fowler, in Gower-street chapel, London.

It is greatly to be regretted that he did not continue his autobiography to a later date; but the task, he said, was too painful for him.

With a view to allow (as far as possible) the narrative to be continued by the SAME HAND, letters from Mr. Blackstock to confidential friends are subjoined. But it may be first necessary that a few particulars should be stated.

In the end of the year 1847, Mr. Blackstock quitted Gower-street chapel; and during a short period, by the wish of a few attached friends, he preached in a small chapel in London. The shattered state of his health soon compelled him to resign, and to seek, if possible, repose and retirement in the country.

After a few months' interval of rest, he accepted an invitation from a small church at Watford. But there

his ministry was not long acceptable: the same unhappy spirit which had latterly blighted his prospects of usefulness, again followed him.

In August 1849, he gave in his resignation to the kind and friendly manager of that church, Mr. Wells.

The scattered remnant in London, who had never ceased to regret the loss of his ministry, and who eagerly desired his return, finally had the satisfaction of seeing this beloved and greatly valued servant of God once more among them.

He opened a chapel, by Fitzroy-market, in October 1849, and there continued to preach to his "own people," until within a few days of his translation to glory.

The death of Mrs. Blackstock, which took place in 1842, he has himself narrated. In every sense, the loss of such a wife, mother, and companion, was a very heavy one.

It was she who managed the domestic affairs, and guided the children. These new and difficult duties then devolved upon him; and at that period he was in the strongest and hottest fire which he had ever passed through: and having no longer her encouraging word, and affectionate sympathy, he felt almost overborne by his complicated trials.

Under these circumstances, and feeling that his young family required maternal care and superintendence, he eventually married a much esteemed and old friend of his late wife; the eldest daughter of Mr. Thomas Haggard of Potton, and sister of the two young Christians, whose early death from consumption is

mentioned in the Memoir, (Chaps. XV. and XVI.) and to whom Mr. Blackstock had been as a spiritual father.

We here close the outline, intending (after inserting the letters) to carry it on by giving particulars of the severe illness of Mr. Blackstock in November 1849, and of his death, which occurred 30th August, 1852.

ii. 10. Perhaps it is as honourable to *suffer* for Christ, as it is to work for Him.

Upon my enemies (for many of them are God's servants and children) I am *kept* from seeking to *retaliate*; I try to rise and work as if I had *never* received a single wound.

For years I have *not been suffered* to return so much as a tart reply to any of them; I desire by the grace of God to follow His example, who when He was reviled, reviled not again. I am set upon my watch-tower, and stand in my ward whole nights. I cannot get so near to my Father as I could wish, but through mercy I retire frequently.

My dear daughter H—— has been unwell. . . . I am led much to pray for my dear motherless children. My hope is in God. I *long* for a closer walk with Him, but cannot do anything as I would. . . .

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTER II.

(*To a Friend, (now deceased.)*)

London, 1843.

. . . . THE savour that is upon your letter assures me that the heavenly Bridegroom has looked in upon you. I say, O thou that art highly favoured, what a mercy it is that your Beloved has once more visited and comforted your soul! May He enable you, whilst you are near Him, to praise, admire, adore, and bless Him. Dying love manifested calls for living songs of praise!

May Jesus now keep you feelingly *near* Him, and give you liberty to plead with Him for *yourself* and for afflicted, *distracted* Zion, and you will then, I believe, do more business with the King, than the whole of us put together; for we are a people robbed and spoiled, snared in holes and hid in prison-houses; we are for a prey, and none delivereth, for a spoil, and none smith, Restore. I assure you that, as a friend in the Lord, I set some store by your prayers.

Go in, Esther, before the king, and the Lord indite and fulfil all thy petitions. He will not, I know, despise the groans of his elect, who are at the ends of the earth—far from Him in their feelings—but *you* are *near*; fail not to put in a word for the despised scattered few; “who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

It seems to me that I am in the twenty-first chapter of Isaiah, the first twelve verses—“And he cried, A lion: My lord, I stand continually upon the watch-tower in the day-time, and I am set in my ward whole nights: and, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground. O my threshing, and the corn of my floor: that which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you. The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.”

But the dear Lord still keeps me much in the dark, as to what his gracious designs are towards us as a people. I desire grace to wait upon Him, and to be *still* and know that He is God.

I am endeavouring to keep on the *watch*-tower, and stand in my ward whole nights. He gives me a little liberty to plead with Him. I spend much time in this chamber, trying to call upon Him, reading, *pondering*, and *searching* the word.

I sometimes hope He is bringing me nearer to Himself, but often feel pressed above measure, beyond strength, and feel very faint.

Your affectionate friend and pastor,

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

I should feel thankful for an interest in your prayers ; I know the way, but I want faith to enable me to cast myself into the very bosom of my God.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTER V.

London, 1843.

. . . . I HAD a very good day on Sabbath, especially whilst the people were singing the second hymn. I felt as if my LORD WERE COME ! and I found his presence delightfully sweet. I had a blessed time in delivering my discourse, and the people said they had also in hearing. O for more such seasons in this dark and cloudy day. . . .

Tell young — that he is in a good college, if the Lord keeps his soul *awake*, by *grace* working through outward and inward *trials*. God makes his instruments very often in obscure corners, and brings his work to light when He sees fit. He prepareth an instrument for his work. The ministry, when doing well, is in constant preparation ; but it is prepared as much by *emptyings*, as by *fillings*.

For a real Christian every day brings its trials,—a *daily cross*. Every disciple must learn to brook business trials,—family trials,—church trials,—bodily infirmity trials,—and heart trials.

Now and then we get a little comfort ; such seasons are sweet, but short, yet long enough to show the difference between the *comings* and *goings* of the heavenly Bridegroom. The worst is when He goes his long journey, and takes his bag of money with him ; I find it but poor house-keeping when the Lord and Master is from *home*. But O, what a mercy it is that He comes again. . . .

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTER VI.

London, 1843.

. . . . THE light of God has latterly entered my soul with such *solemn, awful power*, as has laid before me evils of my heart which I had never known before; the house has been swept and the vessel rinsed out, according to that, "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord," &c.

O, what I have passed through, no pen could utter! I saw and felt in my fallen nature a fountain of unbelief, infidelity, pride; of every species of desperate wickedness and folly. Never did I cry, "O, wretched man!" more feelingly. The Lord seemed to empty me, and lay me in the dust.

I looked *down* into the bottomless *abyss* of my own heart, and if ever I confessed my *heart sins*, I did so then, with unspeakable groans.

I saw *all* Adam's race by nature to be as bad as myself (whether they knew it or not). Yes, the highest moral character, with the most favoured Christian, is in *nature* no better than I am,—there is no difference.

From this dreadful hole of the pit, my eyes were lifted to the consideration of Christ dying to redeem his elect. It seemed *too much* to believe that JEHOVAH had ever taken flesh, and died for such deceitful wicked wretches! Yet I could not deny the fact, but was enabled most firmly to believe, and truly I marvelled!

When this truth (of Christ's dying for his elect and for *me*) was feelingly established in my soul, my eyes were raised yet higher,—to the Father's giving his precious Son to die for *such* sinners.

This appeared to surpass *all* the wonders I had ever seen or felt! O, what did I see here! How those words did shine, "God so *loved* the *world*,"—"Herein is love,"—"He that spared not his own Son," &c.

My deliverance was now carried on; I had but little joy, yet a sense of deep self-abhorrence, and a holy mourning rested on me. I searched the Word for a text, it being Saturday; the Scriptures seemed to *speak afresh* to

me, chiding, reproof, admonishing, strengthening, comforting.

This was a great Scripture with me that day, "His is but for a moment; in his favour is life: we may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." I never had so much from these words, as I had on that day. The fifteenth and four following verses of the seventh chapter of Isaiah appeared to lie before me.

Lord that day seemed to take his besom, and sweep from my conscience, affections, desires, and spirit, everything that was unlawful in his sight.

On entering the pulpit on Sabbath morning, I was brought very low in my soul, deeply abased, and without fears that my God would humble me among people. But let me ever praise Him, He indulged me whilst delivering my testimony, with a comforting sense of His *presence*, and with unusual light, ability, faithful love and power. I seemed to be sweetly healed, and I think He has not been *far* from me since.

When I had finished my testimony, I sat down to praise love and gratitude to my God. What I am, in any sense, I am by the grace of God alone; grace shall sustain and keep me faithful, and grace alone shall have the praise.

At present there are no dusty corners, to my knowledge, in my *conscience* which have not been recently swept by the good hand of my God.

I desire to be kept honest and upright in his sight, to have my mind open to conviction, and to be made to be kept truly *humble* and *meek*, that He may guide me by His judgment and teach me his way.

I think I see terrible *storms* coming upon me, scorn, scorns, reproaches, and perhaps castings out; but God will keep me under the shadow of this Rock, I do not much fear them, Christ will be *TRUE to me*, I am sure.

ED. BLACKSTONE

LETTER VII.

London, 1843.

. I KNOW better than to trust in appearances, yet they seem assuming a rather better aspect at Gower-street. I do not as yet know the will of the Lord, whether I am to remain here much longer or not, but at present He helps me to *rely* a little upon Him: in these things He has laid me at his feet.

I had a very good day yesterday, from 1 Cor. vi. 20. I was much *blessed* in my own soul, and the people expressed similar feelings. There was again the same blessing at night; and, as no change had taken place in my mind as to my understanding the Scriptures in reference to communion, and as I had been tried through the week, in consequence of differing in judgment from the brethren, and many others, I had for several days entreated the Lord for *another sign*.

I had received no answer by means of words applied. I therefore besought Him to grant *this* petition,—that, if I was *wrong* in my present practice of open communion, He would bring a *dark cloud* over my mind whilst I was at the table,—if *right*, that He would graciously grant me His *presence*.

Never in my life did I attempt to *prove* the Lord in a similar way. But, whatever it imports, not a cloud passed over my mind at that ordinance; on the contrary, I had a most comfortable sense of the Lord's gracious, I may say, *glorious presence, all the way through*. And while I was speaking to the people, the Lord in a singular way broke in upon me, as if to say, "Now see whether I am a God answering prayer, or not!"

The power was so *great*, and so comforting to my soul, that I had difficulty in refraining from weeping with joy. On the subject of Communion, I have met with neither man nor woman, who has been led to *study* and to *ponder* over the subject so *carefully* as I have been, since the days of John Bunyan.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTER VIII.

London, 1843.

. . . . I HAVE this morning been privileged with some close pleadings with my God, and felt supported by those words of our much loved brother Toplady :

“ My God is above men, devils and sin,
 My Jesus’s love the battle shall win ;
 So terribly glorious His coming shall be,
 His arm all victorious shall conquer for me.”

I have laid these words feelingly before my God. In the day of my espousals I was much lifted up into *near pleadings* with God, but having at that time my livelihood to earn, my opportunities for retirement were few. Yet I was almost always praying and praising ; but I do judge that never, from that time to this, have I been so favoured with near earnest and strong pleadings with my God, as I am *now* favoured with. Indeed I am literally SEPARATED to it, and to the Gospel of God, as I never was before ; and am obliged at times, in the midst of this most heavy trouble, and these solemn addresses to Jehovah, —who withholds not from me the face of his throne,—to stop and weep, and say, “ Will God in very deed dwell with us ? ”

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTER IX.

London, October 1843.

. . . . I HAVE to live by *faith* in the exercise of prayer, for everything ; hitherto the Lord has helped me, and as sometimes I fear the worst, as respects this world, so at other times, I really wonder that I should *ever question* his goodness.

Yet, alas ! when the *strait* comes, I am too often ready to say, “ I shall one day fall by the hand of this Saul,” —which was with David (and I trust is with me,) one of the devil’s lies. I have lately had to cry, “ Father, do not

leave me—do not forsake me ;” bless his holy name, He hears me.

To-morrow is the anniversary of the glorious day of my Maria’s triumphant departure to glory.

Dear soul ! she is indeed taken away from “ the EVIL to come.” I was enabled to put a stone over her grave six months ago, with the following verse, written by me, from some of her last words :

“ Dearest Jesus, fetch thy bride,
I long to leave my clay ;
Anon, her loving Lord replied,
My fair one, come away.”

Ah, my friend, I lost a faithful, affectionate wife in her, and her memory is most sweet. She has left me in the wilderness ; indeed, for the last twelve months I have gone through more *heart* trouble than I ever went through in the same space of time.

Yet, though I am swimming through a boisterous sea, the Lord is with me at times, very *sweetly* and *powerfully*. He brings me to live much in retirement, and at a throne of grace, and often favours me with his *presence* and *power* in the pulpit, as I never before experienced. Still I am ready to say,

“ More frequent let thy visits be,
Or let them longer last,
I can do nothing without thee,
Make haste, my God, make haste.”

I thank God for all his mercies to me ; they are *great*, and I am undeserving. . . .

E. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTER X.

London, 1843.

. . . . In the morning I spoke from the last verse of the 107th Psalm, and handled the subject in a way almost new to me.

I was led to draw into the sermon a commentary on nearly the whole of the Psalm. It was one of the deepest

discourses I ever delivered. I had gone through the preceding week in my own painful *experience*. not one-eighth part of what I had *known* and *felt*, but hearers listened to it apparently with the most silent devout attention.

The Lord was with us, for I *felt* his *glorious* presence, and though I avoided the people, I saw some *beaming* hearts and shining faces. Help me to glorify the Lord in his mercy.

At night I spoke from 1 Corinthians xv. 10, "By the grace of God I am what I am." After I had delivered an introduction, I tried to show, first, what a true believer is in himself, separated from the grace of God. Secondly, What the grace of God is. Third, Its communications from Christ, its operations, feelings, fruits, and effects in the conversation, life, and conduct. And, fourthly, that all the glory of Christian *fruitfulness* is to be given to the God of all grace alone.

I had much holy liberty and power, and both morning and evening, I seemed to want at least half an hour longer. Thus a great and gracious God has blessed me through another Sabbath; the bush burns with fire and yet it is *not* consumed. The Lord alone be praised. I cannot help *loving* the people at such times, I cannot not be a pastor, but a brute, if I did not. . . .

ED. BLACKSTONE

LETTER XI.

London,

. . . . SABBATH morning, I was in great darkness, age, confusion, and misery, and the text appearing almost naked; but I had a very good time in prayer, and had no sooner read my text, than the Lord *gloriously* appeared for my *deliverance*. Isaiah lxi. 1: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them who are bound."

And now, my friend, allow me to say, that I never had two *greater* times in one day, since I have been in the ministry. The Lord, as soon as I had read my text, broke in and favoured my soul with very great *power*, enlargement, savour, light, and liberty.

To my soul, the light and glory of God filled the place, and I think no man ever had a larger measure of the anointing within those walls; and I believe that many of our people would say the same. The evening opportunity exceeded the morning, though I got no further than "to bind the broken-hearted." It was peradventure in some respects, the greatest day *I ever had in my life*.

And yet, I was not without trouble of mind during the interval. I did, however, wonderfully prove that His grace was sufficient for me. His strength was made perfect in my weakness, and I could glory in my infirmity. To Him alone be all the glory, for I had no room for boasting; yet I clearly proved that the Lord had *no controversy* with me, and that there is nothing the matter between HIM and my soul. Glory be to my Father, to my Redeemer, and to my soul's most precious Comforter.

A strange gentleman desired the printing of the two discourses. Through mercy we were well attended both times, and the people seemed deeply attentive to my testimony. I may say the Lord was with us of a truth. . . .

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTER XII.

London, 1843.

. . . . I HAD a solemn opening of Belshazzar's feast last night, and I said to myself, Is this their kindness to our heavenly Friend? •

I stand as an *ambassador* for Christ—the anointing oil of my God is often upon me—I stand as a *proxy* for Christ—I am, as most of his servants ever have been, poor in this world's goods, and so was He, since "for our sakes He became *poor*."

In the world I am disallowed, dishonoured, despised, forgotten, but then HE has counted me faithful, putting

me into the ministry. He has laid a solemn upon my conscience to speak in His name; and obtained *help* of *Him*, I continue unto this day.

In my ministry He is still with me, and per keeps me as *near* to *HIM* in my soul, in my *manner* of preaching, as are most of his wi this day.

I am willing to give a reason of the hope that to show my CREDENTIALS to any who fear God. I and manner of life are not unknown. He has me to bear many reproaches, and *much* ill-treat His name sake; and perhaps my tribulations or hand, and His anointings on the other, render n sense, as fit a representative of His cause, as the could be found. Therefore I consider what is do is, in the main sense, *done* to *HIM*—whether of g evil: “Inasmuch as ye did it, or did it not, to th these my brethren, ye *did it*—or did it *not*—to *me* is surely the standard by which HE will reckon i in the great day of account.

It therefore appears to me an awful thing whic and Z—— have done, and I believe they will yet so; and if there is not much of the love of this w the pride of life in them, I have lost my eyesight.

It is what I hope I shall never be left to do have not so served *all* the Lord's ministers: no do would admit some, but this is only like slaying t prophets, and garnishing the sepulchres of thei The Lord will look more narrowly into this ma than you have done, and you will see it in a differ to what you do, when your eyes are anointed v *salve*.

May you not be left to drink too much into t spirit. Remember Lot's wife. It is a *hard* thi a Christian. . . .

ED. BLACK.

LETTER XIII.

London, 1844.

. . . . I KNOW that, whilst here,

"Eternal wisdom ne'er design'd
To give me always joy."

God has *many* things to do in us, and with us, besides *comforting* us.

Of all the lessons ever set before me, this is the hardest to learn, *how*, "The just shall live by his faith." Surely this is not to teach us to trust in God in a *loose* way, to be carnally secure, to be quite satisfied to remain in a dark, dull, cold, dead, and lifeless state.

No, he who is taught this lesson, must have learnt first, that without Christ he can do nothing, that God's mercies are always *sovereign*, that faith is the special *gift* of God. God must give him faith, and enable him, by crying to God, and pleading the promise, to fetch in his supplies from God, both temporal and spiritual.

Faith fetches her food from far; thus, a divine faith is a handmaid to run errands and bring in supplies. A divine faith goes abroad on heavenly business, and yet stays much at home to keep the house in order.

I have much reason to complain of myself, but have *no* reason to complain of the Almighty.

The opposition to my labours continually increases. . . . my opponents wax stronger and stronger, *we* weaker and weaker, until I think the expenses of this place will beat us. Well, the Lord's *will be done*!

Their prosperity, and our adversity, seem *strange* to me! Yet the word says, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." Persecution from the *world* we expect, but opposition—such terrible opposition from the saints of God, seems somewhat *new*!

It is my mercy that the Lord has not left me to travel *alone*; He now and then favours me with his real *presence*, and gives me a great desire to cleave to Him, and *patiently*

submit to Him. "Offences must needs come, but woe unto the man by whom the offence cometh!"

In many of my inquiries of the Lord, I appear to be answered by these scriptures, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter," and, "What is that to thee? follow thou me;" which is the Lord's way of answering his children when we are too inquisitive.

Our Captain understands the warfare, I do *not*—all that I know is, that I must keep my post, and fight, until He shifts me. We have been helped through every difficulty hitherto, and we have had many.

If I am called to *suffer*, I hope I shall be as a lamb when *dumb* before her shearers, that I shall be enabled to take all *patiently*. . . .

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTER XIV.

London, 1845.

. . . . WHAT a life has mine been since I saw you last—At Wolverhampton,—Lakenheath,—Wolverhampton a second time,—Leicester,—and at this place,—a place which of all others, I should scarcely have *dreamt* of.

Did you ever see the picture of the Barber fighting with the Chimney Sweeper, until you could hardly tell the one from the other? I have had the *soot* bag beat about me until I present a wonderfully piebald appearance! so much so, that many *shun* me, as if I had the plague. "Look not upon me because I am black, because the sun (of persecution) hath looked upon me; my mother's children were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept." Song of Sol. i. 6.

For many months after I first came here, I was received so *fully* as I hardly ever had been before; but when cruel prejudices were sown against me, and took root, we had a division. . . . Numbers have fallen away since, so that we have scarcely half the congregation we used to have. They put me under the parson's law, which is, "Let us starve him out." And I have often feared, and do often

fear, they will succeed ; but hitherto has the LORD *helped*.

We have just had strength enough to stand, and none to spare. Our expenses in this chapel are great, having about 250*l.* a-year to raise before there is anything for the preacher. I think the interest raised about 400*l.* last year, and we got through with "the skin of our teeth." I have in me all the symptoms of Zion's diseases ; but the Lord is often *very kind* to me in the pulpit. I have enjoyed *much* of his *presence* at one time or another in Gower-street chapel ; and perhaps never was so *completely delivered from the fear of man* before. I generally stand up and speak as if I belonged to *nobody* but my Master Christ.

I have eight children at present living with me : J——h, the eldest, now maintains himself,—he is in a wholesale warehouse in the City. The rest I have, under God, to provide for.

When I look back upon my past life, I say, "O, what a dangerous pathway !" He has led the blind by a way I knew not. I look for little else but tribulation during the rest of my journey, and begin to hope for my *good things beyond* the black river of death.

I would that I had been a more powerful *pleader* before the throne, and a more *valiant* soldier in the field of action. But I often feel that I am a worm, and no man ; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTER XV.

MR. BLACKSTOCK, *to his Sister.*

London, 1846.

. . . . I OFTEN think of my native place, relatives, and some of the scenes of early life. I often think of my DEAR MOTHER, and also of my father.

My mother's kindness and affection are indelibly impressed upon my memory. *That* was our first great loss : the event of her death was succeeded, in my experience, by

a long train of afflicting events. Indeed, I have often wondered at our *lot* : as a family, it has appeared to me unusual. But I forbear to go further.

What had become of me, if God had not *called* me by his *grace* ? I remember well the spot where the arrows of God first entered my conscience, where the Lord first *quicken*ed me, where He first taught my soul to *pray* to Him,—where He first raised me to *hope* ; and when again sunk in desperate fears and bondage, He gloriously delivered my soul, manifested his powerful *love* to me, *pardoned* my sins, and brought me into a holy and blessed *liberty* ! How I sung, “The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, and I have a goodly heritage.”

From this time, I dwelt for more than six months under almost the *constant shine* of the great Sun of righteousness ! What I enjoyed of delight, love, and communion with God, was known only to Him, and my own soul !

These were by far the happiest months in my life, nor do I now ever expect to enjoy their equal, until I reach the fair haven of infinite and everlasting delights, rest, and peace. Thus saith the Lord : “I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.”

I *lived upon* my Saviour's *smiles*, and leaned upon his breast ; He drew me by the bands of his loving-kindness. I often walked through the crowded streets of Manchester, in *close communion* with God, overlooked, forgotten, unnoticed, or despised by all around me, when I would not have exchanged places with *any* person upon earth.

I lived above kings and emperors, and found that a saint in rags was better off than a sinner in robes. Those were golden days, halcyon hours, sacred seasons with my soul ! Yes, certainly those days were the *best* I ever had, when I drank largely of the pure blood of the grape. But now, the motto is, “*Fight* the good fight of *faith* ; lay hold on eternal life.”

My life has been a piece of chequered scenery. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous ;” but the best of it

is, "The Lord *delivereth* him out of them *all*. Of late, much of my suffering has been from those whom I called "DEAR BRETHREN," and who called me "DEAR BROTHER." The enemy, that old whisperer, has *separated* chief friends.

What these *think* of me, I know not, but they treat me as if I were one of their *worst foes*. All that prejudice, ill will, bitterness, and untiring opposition could do, has been done, and is being done against me. They have cast out my name as EVIL, and have so far prevailed against me, as to fix in the minds of hundreds an inveterate prejudice, so that I think myself treated worse than a dog.

All this, too, is for nothing more than breaking bread to a CHRISTIAN community! These things have been a *trial* to my *faith* and *patience*. They are likely to remain so.

But still, my merciful Father has *not* forsaken me. We were a week or two ago in a great strait in Gower-street, but last week I preached two sermons, when our collection that day amounted to 51*l.* 6*s.* It was nothing less than the *kind* hand of God that sent us this sum. So that hitherto hath the Lord helped us. "Behold, I make a way in the wilderness, shall ye not know it?"

No one should have made me believe that God's ministers could have behaved as they have done to an innocent man, if I had not felt it; I mean, *innocent* towards themselves, for before God I am the chief of sinners. However, "My Father's hand prepares the cup, and what HE *wills* is best." I have suffered violent and long-continued persecution from the church of God, and therefore I cannot wonder that popery is now being brought in at a great rate? Alas! alas! I fear, if I should live, to see ere long the host elevated in the streets, and that great outward persecution may be expected.

The church of God will (as I believe), go through *first* a baptism of fierce persecutions, and perhaps after that a baptism of the Spirit of God, which may bring real Christians (who survive the troubles of the church) into a better temper. . . .

Your loving brother,

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTER XVI.

London, 1848.

. ON the solemn occasion of the death of my dear wife, I was greatly distressed and tried, and my poor children appeared to me to be sustaining a *loss* that I could never make up to them.

The funeral and its accompanying expenses had necessarily required a considerable sum of money, and I feared that the children would have to suffer in consequence many privations.

In addition to these anxieties, I had then a division, and everything seemed to wear a gloomy aspect.

At this time I had these words continually, "The righteous is taken away from the EVIL to come," Isa. lvii. 1. I felt more than sure, that my dear wife was gone to glory, for such a sick and dying bed I had never seen before ; but "the EVIL *to come*" often lay before me. . . .

I sought the Lord to open his hand once more ; and although to me there appeared *no way* possible, yet the Lord found one, for a beautiful note was sent to me in the chapel, with 10*l.* in it from an unknown friend ; another shortly after presented me with 15*l.* ; and some kind friends from a distance sent me 10*l.* I had, besides these sums, other smaller presents.

I was also some time after presented with a *box of pills*, which were the most palatable I ever had, for on opening the box, I was not a little surprised to find it contained five sovereigns ! This was the most extraordinary little packet of *medicine* that I ever saw or heard of.

The Lord has shown me that He can send a gentle rain, or a copious shower, or a season of long drought, whenever He pleases. He can stop the springs, dry up the brooks, and make us return with *empty* pitchers. This He does to humble us, to show us our state of needy dependence upon Him, and to bring us to his footstool with more *earnest cries*.

He has, in fine, most clearly and plainly shown me the meaning of these words, which He once or twice im-

pressed upon my mind, "Behold, I will do a new thing ; now it shall spring forth ; shall ye not know it ? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert," Isa. xliii. 19.

Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord ? who can show forth all his praise ? alas, most assuredly *I cannot !* For He brings the blind by a way they knew not ; He leads them in paths they have not known : He makes darkness light before them, and crooked things straight : these things He does unto us, and does *not* forsake us.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTER XVII.

London, 1846.

. LIKE Adam the first, I feel no inclination to blame *myself* for our long silence. I was very glad to receive your letter, it reminded me of the Shorter Catechism of the Assembly of Divines ; I said, I must answer these questions as well as I *can*.

The health of myself, my wife, and my children, is pretty good, with the exception of E——, who for many months has been very ill, being subject to strong palpitations of the heart ; but since Mr. Cheyne has attended her, she feels much better.

The benighted traveller is pleased if he has one star to cheer his solitary way, so it has been with me ; if I have little to encourage me in the church, I have indeed cause to be thankful for what the Lord has done for my dear E——.

He has *called* her by his *grace*. The work is not a matter of doubtful disputation, it is a most *clear* and *powerful* one. This arrow was first shot into her heart and conscience, "*Tekel*, Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting." She was made to sow in tears. Her convictions were sharp, deep, and cutting ; and her deliverance has been as signal, for the Lord has pardoned her sins.

He did this in Gower-street chapel, by *sealing* words upon her heart, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins : return unto me; for I have redeemed thee," Isa. xliv. 22. Since she has proved the truth of this Scripture, "In whom ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise;" and she has had so *many* promises upon her spirit, that I could not undertake to tell the number.

I do not see her lifted up to high joys and ecstasies although she is not without them, but she has no doubts nor fears. And simplicity, feeling, a soft heart, a loving carriage, and a becoming deportment appear to be the characteristics of the change which has wrought in her. She forcibly reminds me of her mother, of *blessed memory* !

This has been the greatest mercy I have received some time. I felt thankful to see the Lord enter the family once more. Christ's presence and favour are what we need. If He come to his people, let Him come in by what door He may.

I am *often* favoured, and solidly blessed in the pulpit. I sometimes think the Gower-street people do not fare as well as they have fared. . . . I have long wished to see the Lord's will in that place prospering in the Redeemer's hand. I am glad to submit to a God who I know cannot err, or be unkind to his children.

But, O PREJUDICE, Prejudice ! what a green-eyed monster thou art ! She is sister to Partiality, and near to a woman to unwarrantable Dislike. We shall soon again be between Scylla and Charybdis, . . . so that I already hear, at least in imagination, the barkings of the Cerberus.

"No sooner has our crew one danger past,
Than we expect the next will be our last."

I should ask you to excuse the rhyme, if I thought prose were any better.

I do not wonder at your asking me to write cheerfully for I have been so long in the valley of *humiliation*.

or in that of the shadow of death, that I have insensibly and unaccountably contracted a brown melancholy tinge, which sheds itself over both my conversation and my letters. I am aware of it, and I strike right and left in the hope of avoiding my accustomed track, but I insensibly recede to it again. . . .

Touching our *prospects*, we do not *allow* ourselves to have any. In a sense, I work by the day; for on a Sabbath morning in the pulpit I often think,—Heaven only knows how long I shall be allowed to stand here; and supposing it may be my *last* day, I act accordingly. I cannot lean upon a broken vessel. I endeavour to cast myself into the arms of my heavenly Father; and at times I can trust Him to bring me a little on my way. I try to follow the old Scotch divines,—that is, to mind *present duty*, and lay and leave *all* in the hands of God.

I have no more right to choose *where* I would be, than an inferior officer has to choose his post; however discouraged or battered, I wish to stand to my gun until I fall, or receive further orders.

Without the gracious presence of God, this fair Augusta is only a wilderness; and with it, a den of dragons, and a court for owls, is an imperial city, or a royal palace! To be where God places us,—to suffer what He inflicts, and to do what He pleases, constitute true *obedience*; but I am persuaded that a poor mortal may grumble at an employment, where an angel would think himself *honoured*! It is the flesh that murmurs, and if *that* could enter paradise, it would do the same.

The flesh invents, thinks, plans, schemes and contrives, chafes and repines, murmurs and rebels. We have nothing to resist it but *grace*,—given from hour to hour,—as surely as grace and the flesh meet, there will be a battle, and if *you* keep the field, the *flesh* will keep the corner!

Take away the grace of God from me, and I am *all* flesh, and no better than an Atheist! for when I am left to myself I think, and speak, and act, as if there were o God,—and what is *this* but Atheism?

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTER XVIII.

London, October 1847.

. . . . I THINK I am not now so much troubled as I *ought* to be. I have had little else than trouble and uneasiness latterly, so that I fear I am grown callous, and cannot forbear wishing to know the worst.

. . . . I much dread the thoughts of another place in London; I think there is too much *prejudice* sown here against me, to allow me to hope for success. I think my work in this town is almost *done*, and *where* my lot will be cast, I have no idea. My strength is brought down, I have scarcely enough to enable me to cast myself at the feet of Jehovah, that He may do with me as his infinite wisdom sees best.

I do not like this *spirit* of *despising*, it is no good sign! Christ says to his Apostles, "He that despiseth *you*, despiseth *me*; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me;" and I suppose that this rule is true in its measure, concerning Christ's inferior servants.

It is well for me, that I am not left to depend upon professing men and women; I have too often felt the *power of God* to be allowed to do this. I know from the most powerful and satisfactory witness, that the Scriptures are the word of Jehovah; I have felt in my own conscience the law's condemning sentence, and the Gospel's glorious tidings. I know there is a verity and a vitality in the religion of Jesus Christ. In fine, I *know* whom I have believed; my faith, though weak at present, embraces the sublime mystery of God incarnate.

I *know* the healing and the cleansing virtues of his blood,—the grandeur of his robe,—the greatness of his salvation,—the power of his arm,—the sweetness of his visitations,—the heaven of his embraces and smiles.

I know the *sealing* and the *witness* of his Spirit, that grace is an immortal principle, which, in its more powerful workings, saves the soul from reigning, and, at times, from *raging sin*. I *know* that my Redeemer liveth, and that
—hall stand in the latter day upon the earth.

I have no question of my being *sent* of God to speak a little in his name ; if I have thought more of my instrumentality than became me, still, I had my COMMISSION before I ventured ; and many a time since, my soul has had those sealings and confirmations, which forbid me to doubt either my interest in Christ, or my being His [*despised*] *servant*.

But indeed, I have very much to deplore—I have a deceitful, desperately *wicked heart*, that renders me liable to depart from the fountain of living waters. It has been too much for me, even in retired, sequestered spots, and I am still less fit for London.

Formerly, for many years I used to convert the *fields* into my oratory ; I was led to seek the retired pathway, and there I offered strong cries and tears unto God. I know well that the *place* is nothing—a man might become almost a fiend in Paradise ; *grace* alone can bring the soul and keep it near to God ; this, peradventure, may be done for some few in London, but with such a heart as mine, I am not fit for where Satan's seat is.

O, for a lodging place of wayfaring men in the wilderness. O, for grace to seek and find *near* communion with the best Friend.

May the Lord bless you with sweet fellowship with Him, that you may holily trample the world under your feet.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTER XIX.

London, 1848.

. ABOUT seven months ago, the mortgagee suddenly called in his money (1,400*l.*) which he had lent upon our chapel. . . . At the end of last year we quitted Gower-street chapel ; and a small place having been hired by friends, I spoke there a few Sabbaths. But I was soon taken seriously ill ; I continued to preach, however, as *long* as I was *able*, but I am now laid upon the shelf.

I have been under two physicians, the last of whom says,

that through *trouble* my heart is disordered, that its action is much too slow, that it has affected the liver and kidneys. Since I have taken his medicine I have been a little better, but I am very far from well. He does not seem to give hopes that I shall *ever* be well quite again.

I think I feel a greater desire to come out of London than ever Lot did to quit Sodom. On my first coming out I was much followed, but after prejudices had been formed among the people, the scale turned, and I have been despised. I have been more opposed than any other person in my time, as far as I have had knowledge of other persons, believe, and indeed I hope, that my work is done, and wish, if it were the Lord's will, that my *sufferings* were at an end too. But there is no door opened for me in the country, nor is there any likelihood, as far as I know, so that I am in one of those straits, which have marked my singular career.

Mrs. B—— is not well, and several of the children are poorly. To give you a clear account of how my situation stands, is out of my power; I am like the children of Israel when they were encamped over against Pihahiroth between Migdol and the Red Sea. There seems no way of escape or of deliverance. And I believe that, all things taken together, I never before was so effectually surrounded. But still, it does not seem to be quite as in that text, "I will bring the blind by a way that they have not," which text I call the *tried believer's map* to heavenly Canaan.

Yet it is one thing to look at a map, to examine the distance between London and Carlisle, and another to *trudge* it on foot from one place to the other! I think this text should be taken with the words going before, "I will make waste mountains and hills," which may not mean nations, but those pleasant things in which a Christian is too apt to put his trust, "and dry up their herbage so as to have the old fields bare, barren, and waste, and nothing is left for sustenance. "And I will make rivers, islands,—and dry up the pools." A stopping of the supplies, yea, an entire taking away of the means

and now it is, "I will bring the blind by a way that they know not." A blind man can neither *see* for to-day nor for to-morrow, or the day after, and he needs a leader: "And lead them in paths they have not known." Mountains and hills laid waste, and rivers, and pools, and herbs being dried up,—rough paths which they have never trodden before.—"I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." Then they must first walk *in*, and *through* this darkness, ere it is converted into light; and they must be exercised with these *crooked* things ere they are made straight; one of these crooked things is, I think, the believer's crooked *self-will*, which is as much curved as anything I know of under the sun.

Divine sovereignty alone can convert darkness into light, and crooked things into straightness; and this Jehovah can do in an instant, by granting his gracious presence, light, pardon and peace. God writes what no man can read, for He is his own reader and interpreter: "These things will I do unto them,"—if they will be good children? No, not a bit of it! for well He knows that, when left to ourselves, we are foolish, froward children, in whom is no faith. How is it that you have no faith? says Christ, that is, *now*, in act and exercise.

It is sovereign mercy all the way! therefore these things will I do unto them,—not for *your* sakes,—not for your moonshine goodness, but for my own name's sake, saith Jehovah. I will have pity on my own holy name, that it may not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out, so that the devil shall not stick his pitchfork into one of mine elect, and say, "Here comes a Nazarene."

"And not forsake them," that is, I will not serve them, as they have served me, for then there would be an eternal separation between God and his people. We have played the truant, and our Father is looking after us, by winds and storms of adversity; and also by his word He calls us in. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I make thee as Admah? &c. Therefore He will not forsake, but He will restore and sustain us.

I have a great many enemies, but I believe the worst

not always confine himself to our hencoops; I think a witness that the Sun of righteousness often shines through man-made party church walls.

But this is almost *night*, and the shadows of the night are stretched out! Never, perhaps, were real Christians in so disorderly a state as now; and yet we must be particular about *modes* and *forms*, or be stunned with the want of order; we must tithe the anise, the cummin, the mint, even if we omit the weightier matters of justice, mercy, and faith.

Christ, by his death, has thrown down *one* middle wall of partition, and *we* must set up another, or suffer the humane law of starving out! For the sake of uniformity we must push a brother beyond his light, or shut him out. He must see as we see in the smallest matters, or be despised and cast out of our company, just the same as if he had been an infidel! We may see that he is *welcome* to God's bosom, but if he lack light on his face, we must close the *church* doors upon him! Nathaniel has been sprinkled in his infancy, and has been immersed as an adult believer, he must stand fast by the restricting law, or be dealt with as a spiritual varlet who has *no* conscience!

In *our* Zion, immersion in water is to be the boundary to describe the bounds of church communion; it is to be the including and excluding charter,—the Shibboleth of the modern salvo for many a fault, and the panacea for all disorders if not for all disorders.

Hezekiah seems to me to have been of a different mind to many of the brethren of the stricter way: "For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim, and Manasse, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet Hezekiah did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek the Lord God of his fathers, though he be *not* of the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people." 2 Chron. xxx. 18—20.

Although I believe many are honest in their opinions, yet I fear there is much of this self-same strictness that is *unhallowed*. I think this much more excusable in *young men* than in old men, whose spiritual senses have been exercised to discern between good and evil. If we may believe the twelfth apostle, he was sent by Christ to preach—but not to baptize—which circumstance, in my opinion, gives a severe blow to strictness. “Neither circumcision vaileth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature; and as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them,” &c. “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind,” “that there be *no schism* in the body of Christ.”

In defence of infant baptism, I have nothing to say, only that I think there is a vast difference between the manner in which godly Independents and Presbyterians have administered it, and that which the Church of England sees. . . . Might I have my wish, I would have no one put into church fellowship that has not passed the *spiritual birth*; and I would have no one that has, kept out of church fellowship, who lives in the fear of God.

Concerning water baptism, I would have every godly man and woman walk in that measure of light which God has given them. If God *has received* a person, on that very ground would I receive him into church fellowship; and on no other ground would I receive any at all. Rom. v. 7. I would not wish to trouble a brother’s conscience about immersion, nor push him beyond his light; he who has Christ for his Lord, Master, and Saviour, has as much *light* to come to the table of his Lord as I have.

If he fails in one particular circumstance, how *many* circumstances do the best taught of men fail in! It would appear marvellous to me, if there should be found a law in the scriptures forbidding two believers sitting down together at the Lord’s table on earth, who might possibly *be* the same night, and *sit down together in heaven*!

For many years my judgment has favoured the believer’s baptism by immersion, but to make, or stand stiffly by a law for shutting out the godly Pædobaptist, seems to me to be a stretch of power and authority that wants looking

into far more narrowly and deeply than many go are aware of. I think that the *unity* of the Spirit—*love*—each other's edification and peace—are the greater might and worth, than to snap and snarl at *form* of baptism.

"The form of baptism, too,
A cloud of dust will raise;
Here, sprinkling will not do,
And there, will only please.
Some wash the child, and some the man,
And some reject the whole as vain.

"And while such waspish worms
Each other's sides devour,
And buried are in forms,
Give me, O Lord, the power!
The power to feast upon thy grace,
And live the life of godliness."

Yes, and I must add,—

"But when thy simple sheep
For forms and shadows fight,
I sit me down and weep,
To see their shallow wit,
Who leave their bread to gnaw the stones,
And fondly break their teeth with bones.

"Yet chiefly, Lord, I grieve
For my untoward heart;
How full of doubts I live,
Though full of grace thou art!
What poor returns I make to thee
For all the mercy shown to me!"

I love the memory of Bunyan and Berridge, and things I greatly prefer *their spirit* and their example to those of any set of men I have seen in my time greatly despised and abhorred, not only by carnal professors, but by many of God's children; for some of the pilgrims now are like travellers in a Scotch mist, cannot *see one another*.

I believe I am a weak instrument, a man with infirmities and *many* faults, for which my eyes have to flow down with tears of true repentance, like pools in Heshbon. If my heart were not hard and adamant, I should do little else but weep over my

and follies, declinings, backslidings, and base rebellions; but Christ has at times been *very near* to my soul. He is my all in *all* when it comes to the pinch.

I pin my faith and judgment upon *no man*, but only upon what has been *transacted* between Christ and my soul.

You will not know what to make of this assertion—that I have enjoyed more of the Lord's gracious *sensible presence* and *help* in Gower-street pulpit, than I ever did in all other pulpits taken together; and even on the very last day, which was the 26th of December, I was not a little favoured. And *many a sweet* time have I had in breaking bread to that little flock of slaughter!

I think my work is nearly done in London.

What the Lord will do with me I know not. My bodily health has been very much shaken; influenza, gravel, and stone, and troubles, have brought me very low. Perhaps you will say, "all this is come upon you for swerving," &c.

If it be so, my dear Lord has not shown *that* to me yet; I submit my case to the judgment of God, and myself to His will as a sovereign. I have nothing against Him—whether He has anything against me or not. I am greatly abased, and desire to be much humbled, and effectually purged. My Refiner is welcome to trample on my *dross*, so that I may have Him, and be made like unto Him.

As for opposition, that I have had ever and anon, since I have been in the ministry. First I ran with the footmen, then contended with horses, and I have yet to encounter the swellings of Jordan.

Since I have been at Gower-street, the opposition against me from ——— has been so formidable and extensive, organized and *cruel*, that it has far surpassed anything of this kind I have known of in my time; but I must *leave it with God*. . . .

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTER XXI.

London, March

. . . . RESPECTING my reasons for resigning,* t
of my *health* alone would, I think, be sufficient cau
even now I can scarcely walk up a street without
for breath, as though I had been running. This in
and seems to say, "Set thine house in order."

I long for country air, though I scarcely think t
be of much benefit.

I think the time is come upon me when these
are being fulfilled, "And ye shall be hated of all
my name's sake."

For anything I know to the contrary, I came to
a *plain, simple* countryman, without *evil* designs
any. I was not looking for great things,—a small
gation, and a small chapel, would have satisfied m
either in town or country.

The people swarmed round me, and *felt* (or ex
themselves as feeling) *profited* by my ministrations
heard me more than *ten* months before I was
pastor—sufficient time, one would have thought, t
a man's ministry.

They never rested until I was appointed over
but *evil reports* and *slanders*, raised, not by the
world, but by ministers and lovers of truth, soon
them. One after another left, and preaching se
"beating the air." I finally felt as if my work wa
Those who stood by me were too few in number fo
stand together; and when this severe fit of illnes
upon me, it appeared to me as being the hand of
remove me.

I think I have been as surely *driven* out of Lo
ever any preacher was; and I believe that in Great
there are not a few, both of ministers and pr
people, who would never allow me to fill a pulpit
could have their will.

I never had so *many opposers*, and so few friend

* At a small chapel taken by friends, after leaving Gow

I have been in the ministry, as within the last twelve months; *why* it is so, I cannot tell. I consider myself an OUTCAST. There is contempt, wrath, and great hatred. I am the offscouring of all things at this day.

If there should ever be a flock found for me, JEHOVAH *must find* it. They count our steps, and the anointed of the Lord is taken in their pits. As a messenger, I may “cry without;” and as an ambassador, I fear I may “weep bitterly between the porch and the altar,” where Zacharias the son of Barachias was slain. Men cry out after me as after a thief. Lam. iii. 35, to the end.

Many years ago I waded through the former part of that chapter, but I used to say to myself, “I have not gone through this *last part*; but *now* I am in the depths of it.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTER XXII.

London, 1848.

. . . . I HAVE felt necessitated to close my engagement with our people here, and am once more out of commission.

I have endeavoured to lay my case before the Lord, and to *leave* it with Him. He is able to lay both that and my ministry on the minds of some destitute people, if He pleases. I am not looking for *great* things, nor am I expecting them; indeed, I should *not* wish for a large congregation.

I think the time is *approaching* when Zion's valiant ones shall cry without, and when the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly. “Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, saying, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage over unto reproach,” &c. . . . I have measles in my family . . . so that “deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts.” Heavy troubles seldom come single, but—

“Righteous are the works of God,
All his ways are holy ;
Just his judgments, fit his rod,
To correct our folly.”

Physic, when a soul is sick, may be almost as needful as food to a man in health, though not so palatable. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten ; be zealous, then, and repent.” If a kiss, or a stroke of His rod, is all His immutable love, then there is no *cause* for murmuring. In my time I have been a poor peevish Jonah, and He has often seen good to blast my gourds, and lay me low.

There is a perfect contrast between His wisdom, and my foolishness which is bound up in my heart. I desire to *condemn* myself, and to *justify* God throughout. How can I, who am not the Judge of all the earth do right ?

. . . . ED. BLACKSTONE

LETTER XXIII.

June, 1841

. . . . I HAVE accepted the invitation from Warrington, and as the rate of salary was not stated, I have proposed to the parties the following method,—that the incidental expenses should *first* be paid, and that they should be paid upon the remainder as the hire of the labourer.

According to this plan, no burden will be laid upon *their* shoulders : the burdens will fall to my share. This may, perhaps, be the means of stirring me up to prayer, causing me to look to Jehovah for such things as may be most needful.

This kind of engagement savours more of primitive times ; only *then*, there was a great degree of Almighty *power* attending the word, which opened men's hearts, so that they felt it more blessed to give than to receive.

We have had illness in the family. . . . The soul of a man can never find solid satisfaction in outward things ; in this, the quickened soul sensibly feels. God in Christ is the ever-living Fountain ; he who lives daily on that Fountain lives *well*. Cisterns are broken.

“ We lick the dust, we grasp the wind,
And solid good despise ;
Such is the folly of the mind,
Till Jesus makes us wise.”

In those sacred seasons, when grace has taught me to
re upon God, as the supreme and only good, I have found
fe, health, and salvation in Him. Living on the fountain
akes the under streams sweeter. *We* turn away from
ie fountain to the streams ; but when the Lord comes, *He*
urns us from the streams to the fountain. No wonder
ehovah should so often call upon us to turn to Him, see-
ing our treacherous hearts are ever turning from Him.
his wild ass nature, used to the wilderness, snuffing up
ie wind at her pleasure,—in her occasion who can turn
er away ? In her month (of affliction) they shall find
er.

Ours are *gadding hearts* ; therefore God in compassion,
o bring his gad-about *home*, embitters the waters—sows
horns and thistles in the pleasant pastures—raises the
inds, and they rage—the storms and they beat. He stirs
p the four elements. They would be enough, one would
ink, to drive home any fugitive ; but no ! for, saith the
arnal heart (at least mine does), “ I have loved strangers,
nd after them will I go.”

O, how unfathomable to all but unto Jehovah, are the
depths of the evil, carnal heart ! These are bad enough to
ighten Satan, and make him say, “ Stand by thyself, *I*
am holier than thou ! ” “ But this eternal blazon must not
e told to ears of flesh and blood.”

The world's actions are not so bad as my heart's mo-
ves. To believe through *all this*, how difficult ! To believe
hat ? why, that one is a child of God ! The enlight-
ned conscience *calls* for much more than such a faith as
is ! we need a faith that works by *love*, purifies the heart,
nd overcomes the world ! We need the effectual work-
ing of Jehovah the Spirit, sprinkling the conscience with
lood—subduing indwelling corruptions—removing car-
ality from the mind by spiritualizing it—setting the
fections on things above, where Christ also sitteth,—ex-
ibiting the full meaning of that word, “ If any man be

in Christ Jesus, he is a *new creature* ; old things are away, all things are become new."

May the Lord revive his work in our souls, may be, and appear, living epistles of Christ !

. ED. BLACK

LETTER XXIV.

Watford

. You will say, What do you purpose doing ? My mind has scarcely formed a purpose.

But if I may speak of my thoughts and *wishes* : I wished that the good hand of God would open some place for me in the country. I can hardly forbear to think that there may be some destitute congregation somewhere that might thankfully receive my ministry. I do not seek for *great* things, only a lodging-place of welcome for men in the wilderness.

Had I opportunity, ability, and *strength*, I would go out, and wander from one place to another, seeking a direction, until the Lord should be pleased to open a way for me. I have not entertained a single expectation concerning London, because so many of the Londoners have deliberately left me.

I think I must needs be too weak an instrument to undertake the holding of such *erratic* spirits, where truth and soberness would assail in vain ! I have entertained a high opinion of many of them. I felt for them, I esteemed and *loved* them in my spirit. I led to seek their good day and night, I strove as a hen does to keep her chickens together : I sacrificed my *time* and *peace* to their advantage.

I certainly sought their *good*, but they dwindled away from one thousand hearers to about one hundred, and I was obliged to say to some of that small remnant, " Will ye stay away ? " Therefore, I have not entertained a thought of returning to the metropolis, or to its immediate vicinity.

the ears of too many of them are open to that *whisperer* that separateth chief friends.

I think they do not well *understand* God's dealings with some of his persecuted servants. If a man *stands* through much opposition, and becomes *popular*, they conclude that God is with him of a truth ; but if persecution drives him *without* the camp, they suspect that "an evil disease cleaves to him," and that there is too much truth in the *blackening reports* of his opponents ! Roll a virtuous lady in the London mud kennel, and almost every one that passes by will look on with suspicion.

Some country congregations are satisfied with less men than the metropolitans. For anything I know at present, I may have to follow Abraham's example, who "went out not knowing *whither* he went."

A few hours before the receipt of your letter, I had been thinking that the best way I could see, was to cast myself at the feet of Jehovah, under a strong concern to *stay* or *go*, as it should please Almighty God. *Self direction*, or even a step in the dark, is often faulty ; he goes in the right path whom Jehovah leads.

If I should see the hearts of any little congregation of people moved to invite me, I should feel it high time for me to *inquire* of the Lord about it. At present every door is closed, and I can see nothing. If the Sun of righteousness should at eventide break out and shine, and the Lord should take me where He would make me *useful* to souls, I should esteem it a very great mercy. I have often longed to *finish* my course with JOY ! That would form a *good sequel* to my life's history ! Then it would matter little to me *where* I last encamped, before going over Jordan.

The defeat in London still sheds a gloom over my mind. I dare not promise myself aught but tribulation. I could *wish* to live and *die* in defence of the truth. Through the fall of Adam, sin has so thoroughly corrupted every member of the body, every power of the mind, and every faculty of the soul, that the most privileged saint can do nothing good whatever of himself. The Spirit of the Lord

alone can enable any one believer to depart from
resist the current of temptation, to walk in the
of the Lord, and in a course of *holy practical* god

Without the *Spirit's power and grace*, all the p
in the world, however searching, or however prac
never stir up one soul to deny ungodliness and
lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly
present evil world.

If Christ should say, "I can of mine own sel
thing," how much more may *we* say so! I war
from my *entire self*.

Accept my grateful thanks for your kind letter
often looked upon you as being such a friend a
wished to be parted from whilst both were al
ground. And as long as *life lasts*, I trust I shal
your faithful and affectionate friend,

ED. BLACK

LETTER XXV.

Watfor

. . . . SINCE I saw you last, I have had no in
from any place or people, and have no engagemen
ever. I know of nothing, and consequently can say
Every door is shut—every avenue is closed. S
can only say with Heman, "I am shut up, and
come forth."

A season of great and deep adversity like thi
the time either to *make* or to *find friends*. Who l
summer in the depth of winter? It is a dispensat
I am called to bear it.

Abraham went out without a friend, not
whither he went. Jacob was *friendless* when he jo
to Padan-aram; Joseph, when he was in priso
on the dunghill; Moses, when the people talked
ing him; David, when hunted by Saul; Elijah,
the brook Cherith; Jeremiah, when in his low d
then before the bar of Pilate; and Paul,

Asia—to which I might add, John, when in the Isle of Patmos.

In this path walked many a noble martyr; and though the way is *rough*, it is not *new*. Promotion comes neither from the east, nor from the west; it is God who sets up one, and pulls down another. Vain is the help of man! I believe I must find God, before I shall find help. Strange things are sometimes known and proved before deliverance.

I am encamped over against Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the Red Sea. I have the *sword* behind, and the sea of troubles before. I need *great* faith, and seem to have none. Hope is low, and fears run high. I am poor company, especially for the *unscathed* and the *prosperous*!

I feel like a wreck amongst the breakers: it is of no use to trouble, or to burden friends in such a season.

I feel inclined to impose upon myself *mute silence*, until the Lord appears. “He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because He hath borne it upon him.” Lam. iii. 28.

Good people cannot understand a case like *this*; they will only reproach, or *suspect*. “What do thine eyes *wink* at?” said they to Job!

Lord, help me to look to Thee! My help must come, if ever it does come, from the Lord alone.

. . . . Whilst I was at B——n, and hearing Mr. G—— preach, and contrasting *his* prosperous with *my* adverse state, this thought crossed my mind—Well, though I am now brought *very low*, God knows I have passed through many a *hard* fought day!

At this moment these words fell upon my spirit: “God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.” Heb. vi. 10.

. . . . I do not want a fine large chapel, &c.; plain things are most congenial to my mind. A very small place, the Lord’s *presence* and *power*, with a few living souls feeding upon the word, and a bare maintenance for myself, are the extreme height of my ambition.

May the Lord be our guide and counsellor, and direct us to that which shall be most pleasing in His sight! May He show us his way, and guide us in judgment!

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTER XXVI.

July, 1849.

. . . . I HAVE been waiting to see if I could send some account of anything decisive, but I cannot. I had a clear proof on last Sabbath, that amongst the congregation there was a strong reaction against my stay. . . . Several of those who were *anxious* for my being engaged here, now show me the north side of their faces.

A watchful minister can tell better by his own *feelings* whether the people receive him or not, than he can by listening to what they have to say. When we come into a place we say—"Peace be to this house." If the Son of Peace be *there*, the word will *enter* the hearts of many: if HE be not there, the word is, "Let your peace return unto you!"

We can tell when the word *rebounds* from their *rocky* hearts, and flies back in our faces. If there are a dozen persons in this place who receive my testimony, it is more than I know of; and why should I wish to prolong my stay under such circumstances?

My health is better than it was; yet, in walking, I am soon tired and out of breath. . . . No door whatever is opened for me. The HUE and CRY which has for some years been raised against me has, I think, *closed* every door and every avenue.

My experience has for many years been divided into summers and winters. I have had, alternately, a state of long captivity, and then, a state of enlargement. My present wintry state is, I think, likely to be a long one.

I have at times a glimmering hope that God will deliver my soul before He takes me away; but I have

very little hope that I shall *rise again in the* MINISTRY : my judgment tells me that, in that sense, I am SLAIN.

In preaching, I am neither shut up, nor destitute of the water of life in my own soul ; but the hearts of men, with a very few exceptions, seem closed against my testimony. I am heartily willing to spend and be spent in the service ; but if the Church of God is shut up against a man, what can he do ? He must “ weep between the porch and the altar.”

I can justify the Almighty in *every* wave of adversity that has rolled over me. I have no quarrel with Him, and it is of little use to quarrel with *instruments*, for they are in his hand.

I desire grace to lie at his feet, and submit to his will.

. ED. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTER XXVII.

September, 1849.

. I EXPECT, God willing, to open the chapel on the 30th September. I intend to call it SALEM Chapel.

As I have taken it for twelve months, if I live, I have the expectation of another trial in London. I feel that I shall greatly *need* the Lord's favouring hand, and *mighty help*. May He grant me a spirit of prayer, prove my helper and my salvation, and out of small beginnings afford a gradual increase.

Although I have but little time to-day, I felt as if I must write to tell you, and solicit an interest in your prayers. My desire partly lies in those words : “ For thus saith the Lord God ; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them ; I will increase them with men like a flock.” Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

If this door may be said to be open for me, it is the only one. I have to wait and see what the Lord will do. He is all-sufficient, and I have none to trust in save Himself.

May He kindly grant me his guidance, presence, help, and blessing, that I may FINISH MY COURSE with JOY, having fought the good fight.

I remain, my dear friend, ever yours in the best of all bonds,

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTER XXVIII.

Watford, September 19, 1849.

“BEHOLD I go up to Jerusalem, not knowing what shall befall me there.” I expect plenty of exercise of mind, (to call it by the softest name,) but I do not think of wavering: God helping us, we must try.

If He designs in a measure to prosper us, He will, in answer to prayer, touch the hearts of a sufficient number to fulfil his designs; but if He shall say, He has no delight in me! it is the Lord, *let HIM do what seemeth HIM good!*

I could, and can see no other way. The Lord reigneth! clouds and darkness are round about Him, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne. A good soldier, I know, would not flinch in the day of battle, neither would I, although I can now scarcely handle a musket. I have much more need of prayer, than I have power to pray.

I have lost several *great* and *good old friends* within the last few weeks. Mr. Robinson, of Wolverhampton, who died of typhus fever—a most *triumphant* death! Mrs. Cotton, of the same place, an old Christian warrior, whose clothes took fire, and she was burnt to death. The cholera rages in that town. The sick and dying are 50 or 60 of a day. Mrs. L——, of London, died of it, and was buried on the day we took Salem Chapel. She was a great friend to me, and she often said I should *come back* to London again!

. . . . ED. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTER XXIX.

London, 1850.

. . . . SINCE I saw you, I have sometimes been so ill as to have had thoughts whether I should see you again or not. My nights are so trying, through my afflicted chest, hard breathing, cough, and expectoration! These things often make me a burden to myself.

Hitherto I have just kept on at SALEM, "with strength enough and none to spare." We remain much the same as when you were with us, only I hear now and then of the Lord's blessing the word to individuals, which is a *great* mercy.

Mr. B——y drives me out now about twice a week, for a few miles; but however I wrap up, the air catches my lungs, gives me cold, and makes me hoarse.

Your last account of yourself I thought to be very correct; in it you better describe my own case than you are aware of. Indeed, I am ashamed of it—so dark, so cold, so lifeless in prayer, that were I to judge of my state by my present feelings, I should conclude I was altogether dead in sins! Whilst some others are running fast towards heaven, I, in my old days, cannot keep a snail's pace for the better country.

I doubt too many of the Church of God are in *full proof* of our Lord's prophetic words—"Iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold." It is not enough to begin well: we want the same *power* and the same *grace* to hold us on, and to the end. If I am a specimen of the elect, it is a wonder to me that God should save any!

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

[1849-1850.]

ILLNESS OF MR. BLACKSTOCK IN NOVEMBER, 1849—SUPPOSED TO BE DYING—NOTES BY FAMILY AND FRIENDS—RECOVERY.

IN the autumn of 1849, Mr. Blackstock was suddenly seized with an attack of the disorder to which he had long been subject; and before he had sufficiently recovered from its severity, he rose from his bed and went out to preach at Salem. The exertion caused a relapse, and a protracted illness followed.

During this period of bodily suffering, which was often most acute, he appeared to all around him fast hastening towards eternity.

His family and friends, impressed with this belief, anxiously gathered up what seemed to them his dying testimony. Their notes (made at the moment) show the soul exercises and conflicts of the believer under solemn searchings of heart, and prove the faithfulness and loving-kindness of Jehovah to his tried servant.

His mind throughout that illness was deeply solemnized; everything of a secular nature seemed trying to him. Indeed, such was the holy awe upon his spirit, that the attention of his family and friends to the minute, but needful duties of life, almost excited reproof.

Death and eternity alone appeared present to his mind, and he was submissively, though eagerly wait-

ing for the moment when (according to his hope) the Lord should appear, and meet him with "a smile on Jordan's verge."

A daughter of Mr. Blackstock's writes as follows, on the illness of her father at this period :—

. . . . I WISH I could clearly relate a very sharp conflict which my beloved father had during that painful illness, for it made an impression on me which will never be entirely erased from my memory.

I was sitting with him alone one morning. I had been reading a psalm which he had selected, and he was trying to pour out his soul before the Lord his God, but only in a whisper, being too *weak* and *ill* to pray audibly. In this way he lay for about an hour and a half, almost motionless, for I could only see his lips and eyes moving.

I observed his countenance *change* several times, but durst not stir, lest I should disturb him; but as he became *paler* and *paler*, I was greatly alarmed, and was just rising to go to him, when these words came to me, with a *power* that I shall never forget—"Be still and know that I am God."

I became perfectly calm in an instant, and at that moment my beloved parent beckoned me to him. He took my hand and said, "My child, that was the SEVEREST CONFLICT with Satan I ever had; but (he added) he cannot hurt me, he is a chained enemy."

I told him I had been trying to pray to God that He would manifest himself to him again, and that I had had these words in answer—"The vision is for an appointed time; though it tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, and not tarry."

He said, "My dear child, those were the *very words* which I have just had;" and pointing to the wall he said, "It was as if they were written THERE; so the Lord has told us both at once—but, you see, it is an APPOINTED time."

He then told me how Satan had tried to make him cast away his confidence in God's mercy, telling him he was

depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy
Glory, Lord Jesus—COME QUICKLY!—

"Something may be drawn from the
Christian friends, where there has been a *great*
offence taken. They meet in public, they show
civility and politeness; but there is a *great*
they are alone together, and open their *own*
consciences are cleared before God, and then
they are as loving as ever."

Speaking once very sweetly upon the love of
Christ,—“Well, my child, this is not half a
ocean which is in store for me.

“Every round of Jacob's ladder is a stage
place, and O it is both the divinity and human
Christ—how suitable and precious to me
brother Jacob, ‘I have waited for thy salvation.’

“I am like the whale blown upon its back
under the weight of the holiness and
good God. The earth with her bars is about
meals are wrapped about my head. O my glory
Lord Jesus! the centre between me and the F

. . . .

NOTES MADE BY FRIENDS, &c. PRESENT DURING
THE ILLNESS.

November.—Mr. Blackstock remarked that Eccles. xii. “Remember now thy Creator” &c. had been much on his mind all the morning; and had it been the Lord’s will that he should have preached, he thought he could have said something upon it. He repeated several of the verses, signifying that he could witness to their truth. “During night, alas! when Christ is *away*, what watch we keep!”

That was a sweet saying of St. Paul’s, “I die daily.” That is what my soul *longs* after, to die daily to sin, to this world, to the lusts of the flesh, to aught that would cause my dear Lord to *hide* his face from me. I lie passive in God’s hand, to die or to live; yet, ere I go, I could desire another SHINE from his blessed face, another lift from his helping hand. I have had a troubled path; yet such is the way our heavenly Father marks out for his children, and in measure and variety, as he sees fit, the *flesh* must be crucified.

“See the glorious band of saints,
Gather’d from all quarters;
All that stand in that red list
Were not murder’d martyrs.”

Controversy tries a man’s spirit, and shows him what he is. St. Paul and St. John, in defending the truth, would not do it exactly alike. In Paul *zeal* would be more apparent, in John *love*; and yet both would be doing their Master’s work, helped by the same Holy Spirit. I have gone through much trial this night, and I cannot find my blessed Lord. O how my soul is tempest-tossed and dark. [A friend

suggested that he might be going through
ture, "a partaker of Christ's sufferings."]

O, if I could but lay hold of that, and receive
Divine application, what a blessed message
would be to me!

. . . . I have no contention with God.
and righteous in *all* his dispensations; even
afflictions, his chastenings are in love.
grand saying of Mr. Hart's, (though above
regarding Christ,) yet how readily can the
subscribe to it for himself,

"With strength enough, and none to spare."

But the people of Christ are to follow His
times, when I have not been able to meet with
parallel to my own among my brethren, it has
source of great consolation to find FELLOW
Christ in His sufferings.

"In fiery trials thou shalt see,
That as thy day, thy strength shall be."

November 18.—After the relapse, your immediate
recovery was to be permanent; I thought
felt that the cup of fatherly anger was
emptied, some drops remained to be poured
perhaps there are some still,—His will be done.

To walk in the *holy fear* of God is most
blessed. David did so by Divine help for
period, but at length he fell. His fall is recorded
WARNING to us; his restoration to God's favour
proof of the faithfulness of Jehovah to his
engagements. David in the Old Testament
Mary Magdalene in the New, stand conspicuous
their deep evangelical repentance, and as
specimens of God's love abounding to the
sinners.

November 25.—I look not to man; he can do nothing. I believe I shall be brought lower yet, and if ever I am restored, it will be the Lord's work; "for the Lord shall judge the people, and repent himself for his servants, when He seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left." I have experienced before now the truth of those words, "I am the Lord that healeth thee."

November 27.—It is for my transgressions I am afflicted. O that the Lord would *say*, I have blotted out thy transgressions as a cloud, and thine iniquities as a thick cloud; return unto me, for I have redeemed thee. . . . Elihu, though young, was blessedly taught of God; he answers Job wisely, though Jehovah alone could preach him *fairly down*.

There are many deep things in the thirty-third chapter. From the sixteenth to the twenty-second is a description of God's dealings towards *me now*. Yet I know he has but to *speak a word*, and (in a comparative sense) our flesh shall be fresher than a child's; we shall return to the days of our youth.

November 29.—I want a sweet word from my gracious Lord to restore peace to my troubled conscience. I want Him to say *once more*, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

December 3.—Mr. Huntington has described my case in his "Satan's Lawsuit." It is the opinion of some, that after a man has been manifestly made free by the blessed Son of God, the law is never again brought into his conscience; but *I*, am a witness against that.

I have been arraigned before the Judge of all, my

sins set in order before me in *dread array*, nor have the power or *will* to say aught in extenuation. Unlike the criminal at an earthly tribunal, "GUILTY, guilty" is all I plead; and if asked what my sentence should be, I could not alter it, but my silence would well express. Ah! it is a SOLEMN thing to be brought before the living God. . . .

December 4.—Mr. B. apparently dying. A friend said, We have met again once more, to praise God. He replied, Yes, God in the person of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, one immortal God, my MATCHLESS JEHOVAH! Ah! how PRECIOUS Christ at such a time as this!

He has saved me from the sins that have well nigh overwhelmed me. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him."

What an EVIL and bitter thing is SIN! it is that and that only, which separates us from our God. It accumulates and *accumulates*, till it becomes a huge mountain. Who can remove it? None but Christ.

O! how I have longed for his saving *presence*!—How I have prayed for Him,—how I have watched,—how I have listened! The VOICE of MY beloved,—Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills. . . . Ephraim *will* join himself unto *idols*, and while God leaves him, he goes on to his own destruction. He is anything but a "*pleasant* child," but at length the Father's bowels are troubled for him. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? The caul of Ephraim's heart is *rent*, but he is saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

What a *rock* is Christ ! If I had been left to build my hope on any other, where should I be *now* ? “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” It is He that has lifted me up out of the horrible pit, and set my faith and hope upon Himself.

If the foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do ? . . . “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” . . . O that more heed were given to the exhortation, “REDEEMING the time !” The days are indeed evil. “Continue in prayer, and watch unto the same with thanksgiving,” says the Apostle. “Walk in wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time.” Christ shines gloriously through all the Scriptures. How blessedly does John testify of Him in his closing book—“As a Lamb as it had been slain !”

When shall I join in the song of the redeemed, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing !” How sweet is Christ in the character of a shepherd ! “I lay down my life for my sheep.” Yes, his blood is the price his sheep cost,—that PRECIOUS blood that cleanseth from all sin,—yes, ALL sin. He is a brother too—“A brother born for adversity.” What should I DO without Him now ? He has known my soul in many adversities ! I want to be able to say at the last, MY Christ—my Saviour ! O, that He would indeed prove Himself to be MY Christ !

How my heart pants after Him ! How ardently I desire Him !—Yet, do I ?—I would not deceive you now.—Yes.—I LONG after Him, as the hart pants after the water-brooks ! O, for a draught of that living water, the streams whereof make glad the city of God !—by-and-by, I hope to be at the Fountain head. . . .

O, I am not worthy to be made so much not ministered before the Lord as I ought, a longsuffering God. I love you all in you are very dear to me, I could not bear to you, but I hope I am going to meet the spirit men made perfect, in the presence of my d and Saviour. It is HIS PRESENCE that mak desirable.

— has been much on my mind, may th his own time bring him to Himself. I wan the Lord's will, ALL my children with m hoof left behind. . . .

. . . . It is blessed, that of the wicked it is : have "no bands in their death." If it had of the righteous, I should not be among th have BANDS in my death. How shall such sinner as I am dare to approach the brig above?

O, for a draught of living water,—for a SMILE from my Lord and Saviour!

Mr. Blackstock at this period was suppos dying, and all the members of his family (v at home) were around him. His eldest daught the following particulars.

On Tuesday morning, between four and five my dear father, after a long CONFLICT, suddes forth with great vehemence and said, "I KN MY Redeemer liveth, and that he shall sta latter day upon the earth: and though after worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine e behold, and not another; though my veins sumed within me."

"The earth recedes, it disappears,
Heaven opens on my eyes, my ears
With sounds seraphic ring;

Lend, lend me wings, I mount, I fly,
O grave, where is thy victory?
O death, where is thy sting?"

Death has no sting but SIN, and my glorious Christ has SUFFERED for that, on the cross. He has paid the debt to set ME FREE. Glory be to his name. . . . I am going where there is no night,—they need no candle here, nor the light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever—and God shall wipe away ALL TEARS from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. The throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it. . . . How shall such a polluted wretch as I presume to appear before the glorious throne? O, between me and the Father is my MATCHLESS SAVIOUR in garments dyed in blood.

"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Strike your golden harps,—strike your golden harps.

Then addressing his children he said: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

Why tarry the wheels of his chariot? Why is his chariot so LONG in coming?

I shall soon sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of my Father. I shall soon walk the golden streets.

O, I want to be in time for the heavenly banquet—make haste, my God, MAKE HASTE,—

"I'll sing the honours of his name
With my last labouring breath;
And dying clasp thee in my arms,
The antidote of Death."

I shall soon join my dear Maria,—de Elizabeth,—Edward,—Samuel,—and dear —I shall soon be with Francis and John and with their father,—and Thomas New

My dear father spoke much of Israel's children, also of Elijah's ascending into heaven, leaving a double portion of his spirit upon

The following verses he told me had been written to his soul, "I have found a Ransom"—"I was lost in thy blood, I said unto thee, Live unto thee, Live!"

On the 7th December my dear father read the eighty-eighth Psalm. He said when finished, My dear Child, that Psalm is exactly—every line, every word of it—your pen and write over it FATHER'S PSALM, and this over the Psalm in his Bible.

I am like old Jacob—"I have waited for thy Salvation, O Lord." I thought I was alone. Now I can say, like Simeon of old—"Lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." Jesus, come quickly!

"We'll tell the Father in that day,
And thou shalt witness what we say
We're clean, just God, we're clean"

How should any man, sinful and polluted in himself, dare to say he is CLEAN, but through the precious blood of Christ—and as he is in imputed righteousness?

. . . . IDOLATRY is a sin that cleaves us. The first commandment, and the conclusion of the epistle of the last sacred writer, contain strong rebukes against it. The tenth commandment is against covetousness (which is near akin to idolatry). "Little children, keep yourselves from idolatry." The chastening hand of God is

me. I am SORELY afflicted in body—you know not what I suffer, yet think not I murmur at my Father's discipline—no; I JUSTIFY it!—I GLORIFY it!

. . . . Could I now order a prayer aright, I would pray—First, For God's church. Second, For the members of Zion, as individuals. Third, For my family. Fourth, For my neighbours. Fifth, For my enemies.

How little we WALK in our Saviour's steps! His disciples are enjoined to take up their cross and deny themselves. Oh, to be delivered from SELF, which follows like a shadow!

December 7.—You know not what a sharp conflict I have had for the CROSS of Christ. I know if I could but lay the hand of my faith upon THAT, all would be well. God giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

December 10.—I have had one of the most severe conflicts this morning that ever fell to my lot. Some others may have had such an one. It was not exactly like Jacob wrestling—yet it was a clinging to, a GRAPPLING for Christ as if for life and death! The gates of hell, too, they have not been idle. I have had to STRUGGLE with them also.

Some might call this enthusiasm; but to me, they have been, and are, SOLEMN and weighty things.

I have been indeed in a SHARP FURNACE, tried more than seven times; but it is for my SINS, the fire is to consume the dross. I JUSTIFY God for ALL his dealings towards me.

He loves all his children alike, great or small, weak or strong. O, what a GRACIOUS God I have!

My fever is bearable to-night. It seems as if it would rage, only the saving presence of my loving Saviour cools the air, and stems its burning current.

You know the three children were not hurt in the fiery furnace, because the fourth was the Son of God. And Daniel, in the lions' den, received no injury, for his God had stopped their mouths, and I believe, made Daniel feel as safe and peaceable within reach of their paws, as if he had been on a bed of down. . . . O, how good is my Saviour to me! blessed be his holy name, the things of this world are now nothing to me! but if it be his will that I should live yet longer, may He grant that the remainder of my life may be spent to HIS GLORY. All my desire is to live unto God. . . .

How thankful I ought to be for this night. I dreaded it, yet my loving Lord has looked down in tender mercy—He has softened my sufferings.

December 13.—Yes; I have been up and down. I have never read of any being so sharply tried as myself, except Job, and some of the old Scotch divines. Yet, why should I doubt his goodness?

For fourteen years after my conversion I was never left to doubt of my state; but I have since then; and when I am heavily tried, in much darkness, and God hides his face, Satan comes in with those words from Deuteronomy, "Cursed shalt thou be," &c., tempting me to despair.

. . . . Formerly I used to be favoured with an understanding of the Lord's dealings with me, when exercised with trials. After strong cries and wrestlings, the Lord generally gave me some EXPLANATION of his ways; but of late years, I have been plunged into depths beyond my sounding. I think I have been learning this lesson more deeply than ever—"KNOW THYSELF!"

It grieves my soul to see the state of Zion! O, how I would desire to exalt the PRECIOUS BLOOD of Christ; but when one has not the present enjoyment

of its sweet APPLICATION, we cannot exalt it as we would Desertion will bring a man very low ; but O, a little faith in the blood of the Lamb, saves from black despair. . . . The atonement ! my friends, the ATONEMENT ! this is faith's mighty lever to lift the soul out of every trouble. A lively faith in the atonement would raise Zion from her low estate.

. . . . Ah, my friend, the Lord in this illness has made me read the letters of his name—the Almighty Jehovah !—a God of infinite HOLINESS and Justice ! yet, of abounding grace and mercy in his dear Son ! Yes ; He has made me FEEL his holiness and his mercy.

Those words have expressed the desire of my mind during this illness—" O, spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more." Ps. xxxix. 13.

O, for a sweet word from my precious Saviour—a pardoning word ! I do see so many blotches and spots in myself ! HE has been so loving and so gracious, and I have made such BASE returns. Oh, how self-abased I feel ! I know that He has cheered me during my illness with a glimpse of his sweet presence. He has given me peace, and submission to his will, but I want something to lay hold of—some promise with POWER—POWER that will bear me up when the waves and billows roll over me.

Yes, Christ sits as a refiner, and will not take his precious metal from the fire, till He sees his own image in it. I have been sharply TRIED over and over again, and on every point ; but the furnace alone will not make the Christian bright, the Holy Spirit must TESTIFY of Christ and his atonement, and sprinkle his BLOOD upon the conscience.

I look upon every sin—lust and sordid affection, with fear and abhorrence ; I loathe them, and would,

if it were possible, always walk and talk with God. . . .

I desire to submit my will to God's will, regarding my life; but if He would but speak a word of peace to me to-morrow morning and then take me to Himself! How I long to be with Christ for ever, and out of this body of sin and death that keeps me down to earth and away from my Saviour. . . . Dear Lord, I thank thee for not cutting me off, nor dealing with me according to my deserts. Much mercy and favour hast Thou shown me this night, notwithstanding my unworthiness. Thou hast supported my soul—eased my body. Give me, I beseech Thee, now and at all times, a thankful spirit. Look upon me, and visit me with thy salvation. I ask the same for my friends, and if I should be spared, do Thou in tender mercy keep and instruct us, lead us in thy holy fear, and in thy good time bring us to the realms of everlasting bliss. I ask all for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

[1850-51-52.]

RECOVERY FROM ILLNESS—STRIKING AMENDMENT IN HEALTH,
NOVEMBER 1851—REMARKS—LETTERS.

It pleased God in his infinite mercy, to raise up Mr. Blackstock from a bed of sickness, and to restore him to a measure of health, so that he was again enabled to labour among his little flock at Salem.

But it was observed with pain, that his health appeared much shattered, and his whole frame enfeebled. Dropsical symptoms also were apparent, and up to the autumn of 1851, it was with effort that he walked a short distance, or ascended the pulpit stairs. His appetite failed, and his sleep was broken and uncertain.

But towards the end of November, 1851, the measures resorted to by his medical attendant and kind friend Mr. Cheyne, were greatly blessed to his recovery.

The almost immediate improvement, both in his general health and appearance, was so striking as to seem miraculous! His sleep and appetite became natural, and he could walk, not only without effort, but with ease and elasticity.

The surprise on the sudden amendment, was as great to Mr. Blackstock himself, as to his friends. And it was fondly hoped by them that a full blessing would be poured out, both on the pastor and on the people, and that they should long enjoy the benefit of

such a ministry. But the Lord had otherwise appointed.

After recovering from his severe illness, Mr. Blackstock appeared to have regained his natural placid cheerfulness.

The realities of eternity, which had absorbed his mind during that solemn period, had divested earthly things of their illusory importance. And even the wrongs and injuries of this chastened servant of God, if not forgotten, were viewed, less as a personal trial, than as a mournful symptom of Zion's declining state.

"KNOW THYSELF" was (he often observed) the lesson he had had to read, and self-knowledge made charity towards the faults of others, (comparatively) easy. Mr. Blackstock's habit of close self-examination, and of carefully weighing his motives, enabled him to read his own heart, and thus tended to keep him humble, as well as upright. HEART-SINS were to him the great bane of life, and when not enjoying the presence of his gracious Lord, he was jealous lest any earthly object should engross his affections; for this, he distinctly considered idolatry.

In the early stages of his religious life, he had been favoured, in a remarkable manner, with sweet and blessed visits from his Lord and Saviour; when these were withheld, it rendered the earth a wilderness! To be "at ease in Zion," was what he specially dreaded, and apathy and indifference on this point, were sins of no ordinary magnitude in his sight.

The welfare of Zion stood very near his heart, and upon the occasion of the recent inroads of popery, it was observed by all who knew him well, how deeply he felt the DISHONOUR done to God, and the fatal blow given to the true church of Christ; it pressed with a heavy weight upon his spirit, as a GREAT CALAMITY.

Letters to Friends, from 1849 to 1852.

London, September 1849.

. . I RECEIVED both your kind communications, and my thanks for them. I have a hope that the Lord sanctify and bless your late bereavement, and in his time make it appear to you that He does all for best.

the Lord should raise you up future friends, the holy past may instruct you both how to hold them, how to regard them.

ough sin, this is but a poor beggarly world, without interest in God's covenant, COMMUNION with Him, and a faithful friend or two, to soften the gloom of life. Man is originally a *social* being, and that disposition is not to be destroyed, otherwise we might prefer the hermitage.

we are in trouble, it seems pleasant to have a friend from whom we may tell our griefs; and when we have comfort we do not always like to eat our morsel *alone*. Nor is it right, for where then would the fellowship of the faithful be? God, in answer to prayer, can either find you comfort ready-made, or make you one.

whether I become less capable, or less social, I do not know; but I must confess that many of my early friends have died off, and I scarcely find any that can well fill their places. Is it not wiser in the God of heaven so to order things with us, that we may have fewer TIES to earth, and be more willing to receive the summons when it comes?

old men, the world appears to wax old, the wheel of fortune turns up nothing *new*—these crazy machines, our generation, get out of repair. Life is on the lees, it is become insipid, and unsatisfactory. The new-comers elbow us off the pavement; these energetic comers push as if they would push us out of life. Well, all is wisely ordered; in these things, there is a voice that says, "Arise, and depart; this is not your rest." Do not look for ease and comfort now? Seek them beyond the grave.

"There our best friends, our kindred dwell,
There God our Saviour reigns."

You are young, but life grows cheaper as we get older: I have often compared myself to an old horse, when they say, "Send him to the knackers." If this world gave more like Paradise we should be loth to leave it; but seeing it gets more arid we may well look out for a better. As the best fruits which the Israelites tasted in the wilderness came from Eden, so the best fruits the Christian tastes in this life come from heaven.

The three great enemies of the believer are Satan, the world, and sin: Satan is the great arch-enemy of God and Man, the world is his magic lantern, but indwelling sin is the believer's worst foe. Inbred lusts are our lords who once had dominion over us—how often they try to regain the mastery: and would succeed, but for the provisions of reigning grace.

The tried Christian is like Gad, "A troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last," [no thanks to him: but to the triune Jehovah.] The electing love of the Father, the redeeming mercy of the Son, and the all-powerful and effectual working of the Holy Spirit begin, maintain, and secure the reign of grace within him; for salvation is of the Lord.

But for the economy of the covenant of grace, the triple league would have been too much for the brightest saint that ever lived. David is one of the choicest saints in the Old Testament, but he fell into adultery, and tried to cover that sin by an act of wilful murder. Lord, what is man when this is a specimen of the best of men! By nature such they were ALL, and such are WE. Yet he could sit in judgment over a supposed culprit, and deal out strict justice to the offender! But how the scales were turned, when Nathan delivered that message, "Thou art the man!"

Through the power of the Spirit, Nathan struck home. This sword cut, and brought the king down to confession: "I have sinned!"

What a preacher was Nathan! What a hearer was

king David. *Grace* wrought faithfulness in the former, and submission in the latter. Who knows which of these two effects to admire the most? Many talk of David's sin, but few consider his *smartings* under a Father's rod, his bitter sorrows, compunctions, visitings, and deep REPENTANCE. These all cry to us with a loud voice, "Children, do not play with fire, unless you intend to be scorched."

Nathan did not rock the cradle for the devil, by telling David he stood complete in Christ, that SIN could not HURT him, and that all he had to do, was to believe. No, upon his CONFESSION and REPENTANCE, he certainly told him that the Lord had put away his sin; but he also assured him of God's chastising rod,—“Because thou hast done this thing, the sword shall never depart from thy house;” nor did it.

God may freely pardon his children, whilst He takes vengeance on their inventions. Sin is the bane, sore and plague spot of a Christian, but communion with God is his highest privilege and delight.

“O for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame;
A light that shines upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb.”

Those are the best troubles that drive us to the Lord, and that is the choicest experience which draws us to Him, keeps us near Him, and assures us that He is near us.

May this be the blessed privilege of my friend, and may it be my happiness also; then being so kept and favoured, we may, when in the river, sing out, “ALL IS WELL.” Accept the will for the deed.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

London, July 1851.

. WHEN I take my pen now, I often feel that my writing days are nearly over. My heart is heavy, my head confused, and my hand feeble.

Several places which you mention in your letter brought my early days to remembrance, and revived *early associations* which are not easily forgotten.

I was born in Oldham-road, and when a mere child, I used of an evening to watch the old women coming out of chapel in their red cloaks ; there were no other buildings then, only fields. "Many days have passed since then, many changes I have seen."

The map of my journey of life lies in these words, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not." And whether I consider God's way with me in providence, or in grace, it has indeed been a way that *I knew not*. I have been led in many *strange* and mysterious paths, have passed through much darkness, and many crooked things, several of which I cannot see made straight.

I have now to wait to see God's fulfilment of the last clause of Isa. xlii. 16, "And not FORSAKE them." I wish not to be misunderstood ; I am firmly *fixed* in this, that there is *no* unrighteousness with God ! In all the hidings of his face, in all the adversities He has brought upon me, in all his frowns, rods, and sharpest chastenings, He has been most JUST." "Righteous are all the works of God, all his ways are holy," &c.

In calling, and after calling, God was very gracious to me. I think I may say that for many years God kept me well—perhaps more *near*, more *close* to Himself, than falls to the lot of ordinary Christians. But of late years I have often passed as through the belly of hell : everything, both within and without, seeming to go against me.

" My soul with various tempests toss'd,
Her hopes o'erturn'd, her projects cross'd,
Sees every day new straits attend,
And wonders where the scene will end."

When I was fifty, I thought I knew something of the plague of my own heart—of its proneness to turn away from God, and of the rough and thorny way of a Christian ; but I think that since then, I have known *ten* times more than I did.

O, man of God, we are DEEPLY SUNK, and most wretchedly debased in the fall! The heart—who can know it?

“ When the hell appears within,
Causing bitter anguish—
And the noisome stench of sin
Makes the spirits languish.”

Some would say,—What, no further yet? I must answer, “ No!—no further yet.”

If my heart deceives me not, I have seen and felt my sins forgiven. Christ has brought me into his banqueting house, where his banner over me was love. I have been with Him in the palace, in the presence-chamber, and in the palace-garden. His left hand has been under my head—his right hand has embraced me, until I have said, “ My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.”

Nay; if I mistake not, Jesus has clasped me in the arms of mighty grace, and has laid my soul to rest upon his bosom of love, when this life has appeared to me a mere dream, its illusions an empty show, and its inhabitants like butterflies!

But now, I am like one moored in the Dead sea, or stuck fast “ in the deep mire, where there is no standing,” and can scarcely find strength to cry, “ Save me, O God!”

Some would say, “ Look to Christ!”—I would if I could. “ Look to his blood,”—I hold it most sacred, and desire to trust therein.

“ Look to his righteousness,”—I would fain make loud mention thereof. “ Believe, and enter into rest.” To this I reply, Ah, friend, it is hard to *believe feelingly* through so much unbelief, heart treachery, and more than infernal baseness.

My case seems much like unto the man's, who fell among thieves. I lie dying in my wounds. The priest and the Levite are gone past. I want the good Samaritan to come once more with his oil and wine.

I feel as if I wanted one POWERFUL LIFT more up into Christ Jesus—one SHINE more—one cheer more.

"O, let me catch a smile from *Thee*,
And drop into eternity."

I have felt a little of Toplady's hymn this afternoon—

"Though waves and storms go o'er my head,
Though strength, and health, and friends be gone,
Though joys be wither'd all and dead,
Though every comfort be withdrawn—
Stedfast on this my soul relies—
Father, thy mercy never dies."

My chest, cough, and breathing, are very bad ; I can scarcely walk fifty yards without stopping for breath, so that I am evidently bordering on the eternal world.

I desire my kind Christian love to —— &c. May we meet in glory !—wondering, admiring, and adoring Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that ever we should be brought there.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

London, November 1851.

DEAR AND HONOURED FRIEND,

I have seldom, if ever, received a note from any one with more *heartfelt pleasure* than your's of this morning. I had feared I should never again hear from you in this wilderness, and it had been no small grief to me.

I had often brought to my remembrance the precious seasons which you and Mr. —— and I, with your brothers, and some of your children, had together in your house ; and I have thought—"Surely *they* did not enjoy those times as I did, or they would not quite overlook an old and affectionate friend !"

Several of you have been *more* to me, than relations in blood ; and I can honestly declare this day, that although I have been, and still am *sorely battered*, my heart is as warm to you as ever. God Almighty bless you, and keep you, and lift upon you the light of his countenance ; and may we meet where Christians meet to part no more !

I am still preaching to a few of my old Gower Street friends, near the old place. I hope there is a little WINE

still found in the cluster. I now compare myself to a candle burning down in the socket of the candlestick.

I am in my sixty-first year, but visited by premature old age: my heart, liver and lungs are much affected. I have no appetite nor relish for anything; the dropsy has seized me, and mounts even to my neck and head. I cannot walk thirty yards without stopping for breath, so that I often think I must be near my journey's end. I seldom rise until after eleven, and then with difficulty.

My bodily and mental sufferings are considerable. In mind I am still much in the dark; but I can, and do JUSTIFY the Lord in EVERY frown of his dear face, and in every stroke of his rod.

I want Him to come and meet and embrace the OLD PRODIGAL once more, and take me unto Him.

“O, let me catch a smile from Thee,
And drop into eternity.”

I am more tired of my own sinful *self* than of anything else, and shall not be satisfied until I awake in HIS likeness. But I must say the Lord is GOOD—a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in Him.

His sparing mercy and long-suffering have been GREAT to an old grumbling toad—bless his holy name!

“O hear my cry, and come again,
Nor let me seek thy face in vain.”

I have often thought of you, and of —— and of ——, in Lakenheath, whose names are written in the book of life.

. ED. BLACKSTOCK.

A Letter just before MR. BLACKSTOCK'S Decease.

July 29, 1852.

. . . . I RECEIVED your kind letter on Monday, and purposed answering it sooner, but I have had an attack of the stone.

I was afflicted on Monday afternoon for a few hours,

then the pain for a short time subsided, but at 2 on Tuesday morning I was again seized, and continued in much pain and anguish until 5 o'clock, A.M., Wednesday.

Mr. Cheyne very kindly had hastened to me on Tuesday afternoon, and had prescribed for me.

Success once more attended the kind treatment of our mutual friend I am now out of pain. We are fearfully and wonderfully made! what a small thing will overturn either body or mind! I desire to be very thankful to the instrument, and to adore the Author of all good.

I spoke a few words to our people last night from that blessed 37th Psalm, but I sat to my work. "As thy days so shall thy strength be."

I see you have been employed in admiring the works of God, as displayed in the mountains and lakes of our northern borders, until you seem almost poetic. Yes,

"How WONDROUS are the works of God,
Display'd through all the world abroad;
Immensely great, immensely small,
Yet one strange work exceeds them all!"

It were an amazing work indeed to save one sinner such as I am! Surely I may set my seal to that great declaration of the Apostle of the Gentiles, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

I believe Scotland once contained one of the most fragrant beds of Christ's garden, how it fares now with them I cannot say. Lancashire and Yorkshire were, I believe, once in a state in which Ichabod could *not* be written upon them; as for the other northern counties, I know but little about them. Before I came to town, I thought Suffolk and Sussex much favoured.

In religious matters I think countrymen have greatly the advantage. Society in London I compare to Satan's whipping-top! He spins the Londoners round at a smart rate—from Monday morning to Saturday night, all the energies of mind and body are in full exercise to *get a living*, or to keep up an *appearance*; they have no quiet,

they have neither time nor opportunity to examine themselves, to meditate, or to pray to God—unless it be in a short, hasty, ejaculatory way.

In one of my first visits to London, I had to call upon a Mr. and Mrs. ——. I found them in a back attic in Fleet Street. As I knew they were good people, I thought within myself—and *where* do they pray? Alas! said I, they can neither enter into the closet nor creep behind a hedge, nor into the corner of some field; here, almost everything tends to dissipate the mind, and carry away the thoughts far from God, so that what with Satan and one's evil heart on the one hand, and the extraordinary bustle and din of crowds on the other, I have been simple enough to think that it requires more grace in London than in the rural districts, to keep a man's soul near to God.

Godly men are to be pitied in this vast metropolis, where Satan's seat is. I know by experience, that when the POWER is great, a man may pray, and praise, and weep too, in Cheapside; but after all, give me the retired walk. I have several spots in the country that have been HALLOWED to me, and, above all others, the walk betwixt Potton and Everton, in Bedfordshire.

After the ministry of the word, the greatest privilege I have ever enjoyed has been in SECRET PRAYER. What greater favour can there be than what Mr. Joseph Hart opens in that sweet hymn—

“Permits a vile worm of the dust
With God to commune as a friend;
To hope his forgiveness as just,
And look for his love to the end.”

And to obtain all this, through the blood-shedding and death of the Lord of life and glory.

But neither London nor the country will satisfy the Christian unless the Lord REVEAL his face.

“’Tis paradise, when thou art here;
If thou depart—’tis hell.”

I reckon Manchester to be a very wicked place. *There*, in a street called Oldham Road, my mother brought me

forth. In that town I lived in the days of my vanity. In a front chamber in Loom Street the Lord stopped me, and brought me down, and there, in Grosvenor Street Chapel, he first POWERFULLY REVEALED his love to my soul.

Several hallowed spots are now at times before my view in that noisy populous district. There are places which I might have called Peniel, "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

I beg of you to receive the will for the deed—this poor scrawl, as a small token of my regard to you for all your kindnesses.

Your affectionate Friend,

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

London, August 4th, 1852.*

. . . . I sit down at once to answer your letter, with a heart and a head nearly as dull as a statue! Yet, one thing I feel, which is, that friendship—for friendship such as yours, is enough to rouse one from the most torpid state.

In age, our friends are few, and this shows our Lord's wisdom. He diminishes the value of this life ere we enter on a better. . . .

I think that God's truth has rarely been more contemptuously dealt with than it is at the present time; if, therefore, it was to be heard at every street end, I should marvel. "Truth is fallen in the streets, and equity cannot enter."

The nations of the civilized world have given their power to the beast. The Romish ascendancy is palpable enough. These things are fearful! yet these are not the worst features in the present state of religion. "The gold is become dim, and the most fine gold changed."

The main seat of the disease is in Zion's heart. The

* Supposed to be one of the last letters written by Mr. Blackstock.

prophecy is fulfilled, "Iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold." The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. Even Gospel Zion will yet have to take much physic, (nor will that be sugar and water.) Alas! what a tendency there is in me to abuse the greatest mercies. I turn away from the fountain of living waters to some broken cistern, and then, forsooth, complain of muddy water! "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me there is help." It is we who are in fault: there is no unrighteousness in Him.

Jonah discovered long since, that they who follow after lying vanities, forsake their own mercies. I think that many of us have need to cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It requires very much of the POWER of God to enable us successfully to combat Satan, the world, and the flesh—to keep the heart warm, and the fear of God alive in us—to enable us to resist an evil, or a trifling thought. "Take us the foxes, the little foxes that" bark "the vines."

I have seen the time when, if a corruption rose up strongly, it was quickly seized, and seriously carried before King Jesus, that He might ring its neck. But now, the Mansouliaus and the Diabolonians may be seen in the dark lanes with the soul of man, walking arm in arm together. Such treacherous dealing keeps Zion's King at a distance. He that mindeth not small things, shall fall by little and little.

We have, by our sinning and worldly-mindedness, grieved the Holy Spirit. He has withdrawn to a distance. Hence, the means are scarce, and where they are found, they are of little use. There is almost no POWER on the ministry of the word—none when we read it, none upon us when we attempt to pray; hence, we lack experience, sobriety, savour, and fruits.

Paul might say to us as he said to the Corinthians—Are ye not carnal—carnal—carnal? Whoever should draw such a picture as this, and then deny his own likeness, would act the part of a very foolish man. . . . I am satisfied, that man, left to himself, can do nothing but

sin against God. Therefore, I have no ground of hope, in my own case, but the following.

I believe that God has begun his good work in me ; if so, I know that He began it, and has hitherto carried it on, in a sovereign way. If He has a people whom He has loved with an everlasting love—a people sovereignly chosen, redeemed and called, and I am one of that people, then I believe that He will, of his distinguished mercy, save me to the end. Surely He will work in some extraordinary way—surely He will work in every needful way to bring me to Him, and to keep me by Him.

Sovereign free mercy is the only ground of my hope. Some may think this doctrine liable to be abused—it may be so—but it is my last resort, my stronghold. “Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope.” God’s absolute, free and sovereign mercy in Jesus, is the sole and only basis of my hope.

“Mercy, through blood, I make my plea ;
O God, be merciful to me.”

I need GREAT GRACE : I belong to that boat’s crew, whose cry must be, Lord, SAVE, or we PERISH ! O that mine head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night over my own faults. My goodness, like Ephraim’s, is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew, so it passeth away.

I am not well to-day, I feel weak, sickly—have a pain down the spine, and no appetite. If I have strength enough I have none to spare. The rest are well, but the weather is hot and trying. I hope to hear from you often.

Your affectionate Friend,

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

CHAPTER XXXV.

[1852.]

LAST DAYS—CLOSING TESTIMONY—DEATH OF MR. BLACKSTOCK,
AUGUST 30, 1852.

THE letters of the preceding Chapter are supposed to be the last that Mr. Blackstock ever wrote.

On the 27th of July he was seized with one of his usual painful attacks. It was subdued, by the blessing of God, on the 31st ult.; but it returned on the 1st of August, and continued.

During this period of suffering the flock of Salem pressed on his heart, and he not only preached twice the Sunday of the 22d, but also on Wednesday evening, the 25th, only five days previous to his decease.

In descending from the pulpit that evening, he observed to some friends that he had never before reached under such excessive bodily suffering.

But he appeared very cheerful, and several persons remarked (at the time) that there was a peculiar calmness on his spirit, and that in expounding the 136th Psalm, he seemed to have a sacred opening into its depths and grandeur.

As he traced the path of the people of God, seemed from the hand of the enemy"—followed through their "troubles"—showed their deliverance "out of distress," and proved that it was a right way to a city of habitation," he appeared to make a LAST review of the land through which he had led his REDEEMED, and to be calling

upon them to unite with him [the departed of God] in praising "the Lord for his goodness for his wonderful works to the children of

The following letter from Mrs. Black friend, announces the almost sudden departure of the beloved and much lamented pastor:—

London, August 10, 1841.

. . . . I KNOW you will weep with me, when that my head is taken from me, and that you will be no more!

His departure from all the sufferings of this place at eight o'clock last evening.

I doubt not of your being informed that he had attacks in quick succession, of that painful kind which he had occasionally been subject to; and his conviction that it was in this way his earthly tabernacle would ultimately be dissolved: but he was that the Lord seldom revealed to his children the time of their departure was to be.

The violent sicknesses attending those agonies of stone, were succeeded by copious vomiting which so reduced the powers of nature, that all remedies prescribed by the kind and affectionate friend of Mr. Cheyne, availed but little.

Indeed, so great were his sufferings and his weakness that towards the last two days it required two or three female attendants to give the dear sufferer the position of posture which he was often craving.

To all he expressed much gratitude, wishing to be as suitably ministered to when brought into the next world. And on the last day, towards his decease, "I could hardly have believed there had been so much kindness in all the world, as I have now experienced one day."

His patience throughout his sufferings was most

and not a murmur nor a repining word escaped his lips, but all was *submission* and *thankfulness*.

He obtained the manifestation that he so especially craved; and more than once broke out in holy raptures such as these—

“ O bless the Lord, my soul,
Nor let his mercies lie
Forgotten in unthankfulness,
And without praises die.”

O how grand and precious did ATONING LOVE and BLOOD appear as he spoke of them! And with what energy and triumph did he four times shout—Victory—Victory—
—Victory—Victory! But I cannot at this moment give you particulars as I wish

From the same.

THE intensely hot weather, when it set in in June and July, greatly weakened Mr. Blackstock, and led him to fear that if it continued, he might be disqualified for labour, for he said he felt the old symptoms of his malady ready to break in, if the Lord should permit.

The last attack came on the forenoon of Friday, the 20th August, and caused him to retire to his room, and there remain until nearly time to go to chapel on the Sunday morning, when the Lord so strikingly lightened his sufferings, that he was enabled to dress and go forth in his Master's name, to his little flock at Salem.

In addressing them he was unable to stand, though wonderfully strengthened to speak. After his descent from the pulpit his sufferings returned, and compelled him, on reaching home, to go back to his bed. There he remained until the evening service, when the same divine aid was vouchsafed.

He was again confined to his bed from that evening, until Wednesday the 25th, when he rose, dressed, and went to chapel, and delivered his last testimony from the pulpit.

. . . . The care of this servant of God for his people, and his charge, was to the last tender and strong, and

exhibited itself more anxiously as his strength declined. None, he said, but a Pastor, could form any concept of it.

Shortly after his return home from addressing people that evening, his illness assumed a more threatening aspect, and his sufferings were very affecting.

He continued for some nights and days in most sole prayer and converse with God. His petitions were especially for renewed *experiences* of the virtue and efficacy of the love and blood of atonement.

And one time, when his pain was *agonizing* and groans loud, he said—"But I am a witness, that

‘ Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are.’

“O, what a base return I have made for all his mercies—
—What a poor unworthy servant to my Divine Master

“O bless the Lord, my soul,
Let all within me join,
And aid my tongue to bless his name,
Whose mercies are divine.”

“Could I but climb where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o’er,
Not Jordan’s stream, nor *death’s* cold flood,
Should fright me from the shore.”

On the Saturday morning he requested Mrs. Blackstock to read to him, “very slowly,” the 71st Psalm, it being (he said) peculiarly expressive of his state of mind.

Not long after, seeing one of his children in tears, he repeated in a cheerful, encouraging tone—

“No fearing, no doubting, with Christ on our side;
I hope to die shouting, The Lord will provide.”

On Saturday evening (28th August) he appeared very ill; he had been much tried during the day, not knowing what might be arranged for the ensuing Sabbath. He said that the church of Christ and

interests were inconceivably sacred and dear to those to whom God had committed it; that he had received his COMMISSION from God, and that he could give it up to no man, unless the Lord Himself RELEASED him from it.

About ten o'clock he seemed anxious for the house to be quiet, for he was desirous if God would strengthen him, to engage in prayer with his wife and family. He was unable to rise without much exertion, but in a lying posture, and with great earnestness and fervour, he besought the Lord's promised grace and strength, pleading that "As thy day thy strength shall be."

He made deep and solemn confessions of his own unworthiness and shortcomings, and appeared compassed with a sense of utter nothingness, and overpowered by the greatness of rich, free, and wonderful grace!

During the night his ejaculatory prayers were most touching, tears flowed from his eyes, as, in the language of strong appropriation, he called continually upon God—"O MY God, help me!—Help, Lord!—O MY FATHER! be gracious to me when flesh and heart fail!

"O, that precious blood! The Lord knows that the precious blood of Christ has been all, ALL my hope, and all my trust, and that it is all in all now!—but I want a fresh powerful application of it.

"Black, I to the Fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

He then remained for a short period silent, when suddenly he raised his clasped hands, and with his eyes filled with tears, and directed upwards, he burst forth,—

"Behold the BANNER lifted high!
And BLOOD's the sign:
My soul, draw nigh!"

The first of these is the fact that the
University of Chicago is a private institution.
It is not a public university, and it is not
a state university. It is a private institution
which is controlled by a board of trustees.
The second fact is that the University of
Chicago is a research institution. It is not
a teaching institution. It is a research
institution which is devoted to the study
of the sciences and the humanities.

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“surely this must be DEATH.” and pausing awhile, he with great seriousness said, “The place that hath seen me, shall see me no more—yea, they shall seek me in the morning, and shall not find me.”

He repeatedly prayed that his death might be made a blessing to his family—to his friends—and to the church of God. and with much feeling added, “O, that MY DEATH might be a PEACE OFFERING ! ”

He spoke of his little flock at Salem, and hoped there would be peace and unity amongst them. He said he had been a most unworthy servant, to so gracious a Master, and he felt the deepest self-abasement, and a painful sense of shortcomings in all things.

A friend who was present replied, “ How often have I heard you repeat those words,

“ The terrors of law and of God,
With me can have nothing to do ;
My Saviour's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view.”

He turned with a steady serious look—“ Weighty words, weighty words, but I have said many a solemn thing too lightly. . . . We speak and see now, but in part ; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. . . . O, to be among that happy number who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb ! ”

Early in the morning of Monday, he said he had been thinking of that blessed company, “ I am less than any of them ! I am not worthy to be among them ! Blessed Paul was a jewel—and David—I am not worthy to lie at his feet ! ”

A friend said, "What THEY were, they were by the grace of God, and that same grace brought YOU out of the depths of deism."

"O yes! but I want its POWER now, as much as ever. . . . Pray for me; I have many times endeavoured to pray for you all."

In the course of the morning an aged friend (one of the Salem hearers) called. It was feared that his pastor was too ill to see him, but on hearing of his visit, he said, "O yes, let the dear old man come up, I love him in the Lord—yes—I love all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth."

He addressed him in the most affectionate manner, told him that he was longing and waiting for the Lord's presence, and added, "I do not desire to live; all I want is, one SHINE more from the blessed Lord, and then, that He would take me HOME." "O," said the dear Lord brings me there. He shall never hear the end of it!"

He then took an affectionate leave of the friend, blessing him in the name of the Lord.

As time wore on, his physical weakness increased, and his bodily strength rapidly declined, but his mind was never or impatient with his state. His physical illness, his patient, peaceful, and placid submission, and his

He was too feeble to be able to do much, but his restless desire of seeing the Lord's face, and his recedes death, and his

To the person who called on him, he moved him. Mr. Barnard's presence, and his of his attentions, and his

restrained by the presence of a stranger, but continued in the same earnest manner, to plead for the FULL manifestations of the Lord's grace and favour.

To a friend he said, "This is where I am,—

‘Assure my conscience of her part
In the Redeemer's blood,
And bear thy witness to my heart
That I am born of God.’

Yes, I need that as much now as ever."

Then addressing his friend in a most solemn and affectionate manner, he concluded by saying, he thought the Lord had purposes of grace and mercy towards him; and said he felt a particular drawing to him. He prayed that the Lord would call him by his grace, and cause both him and his wife to live to his honour.

About two o'clock there appeared a change. His respiration became less easy, his countenance more fixed, and his eyes raised and motionless. A friend said, "He is going."

But suddenly, and to the surprise of all, the dying saint burst forth:

"Bless the Lord, my soul,
Nor let his mercies lie
Forgotten in unthankfulness,
And without praises die."

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me

"O, PRAISE HIM. Praise Him! to think He should show such mercy to ME!"

His wife said, "The Lord has heard your cry, and granted your request?"

"O, yes, bless his holy name." . . . Then with all the strength he could command, and making an effort to raise his powerless arm, he four times shouted, "VICTORY—VICTORY—VICTORY—VICTORY!"

Again a sort of faintness came over him, but he rallied and said, "I feel the bright vision is overclouded."

From this time, as the difficulty of breathing increased, and his bodily sufferings seemed undiminished, he continued ejaculating, "O, my Father, help! —Lord, save!

"O, that my God would come and meet,
My soul would fly with winged haste;
Fly fearless through Death's iron gate,
Nor dread the danger as she pass'd."

About six o'clock, the last scene appeared to be approaching, for the breath became shorter and more laboured, and his strength, which had gradually decreased, now seemed wholly prostrated.

In this condition, and without the power of even raising his hand, he requested to be removed from the bed, and placed upon his knees. His friends, aware of his state, and dreading that death might ensue, endeavoured to dissuade him from the attempt, but he so earnestly entreated, that his wife, touched by his importunity, consented. Pillows were placed on a large chair at the foot of the bed, and upon these, he was gradually, though with difficulty, slid.

While in this kneeling posture, he was supported by those around him, and his head even steadied by the hand of a friend, so excessive was his feebleness.

In this position he remained about the space of ten minutes. His lips moved, and his eyes were raised towards the mercy-seat, but no sounds were heard.

When this last act of deep self-abasement, and soul prostration before God, was concluded, the dying servant of the Lord appeared satisfied.

He had accomplished his last wish on earth! The SECRET of that solemn conference remains unknown.

MERCY MANIFESTED.

He had "GONE OVER the cities of Israel," and
on of Man came.

"The blessing was on the head of him, there
PARATE FROM HIS BRETHREN."

One ~~thing~~ remains-unfulfilled, it
is ~~the~~ ~~thing~~ to be accomplished!

"And He shall bring forth the righteous, and
a light shall be ~~the~~ ~~light~~ as the sun."

man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

And, "The memory of the just is blessed."

"The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

I then felt convinced that my BELOVED FATHER had either departed this life, or that he was near his end! Besides, I found that I could no longer pray for his recovery—my petition seemed turned back.

But O, the sweet communion I had with him! especially the first Sunday that I lay in bed, and the LAST that he spent on earth! I had his portrait by me, and the doctor having observed this, gave orders that I should be kept in ignorance of the state of my beloved father.

I cannot tell you half the promises which my heavenly Father has given me lately. "The Lord is good, a STRONG-HOLD in the day of TROUBLE—He saveth them that trust in Him—He is ever merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and of great kindness."

And the following lines were very much with me :

"Gold in the furnace tried,
Ne'er loses aught but dross;
So is the Christian purified,
And better'd by the cross."

Thus supported, who can faint?

And now, although I own that my eyes are sore with weeping, yet, tell them all from me, not to be distressed, our LOSS is HIS GAIN. Yes! yes! he has attained his highest wishes! he is safely landed on the shores of bliss!

He has fought the good fight, and finished his course! And now, his Lord and Master has given him the crown that was laid up for him. And he has, as his companions, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all those who have gone before. And a golden harp is given to him, to join those happy songsters, and they are all now praising Father, Son, and Spirit, for all his great and unspeakable mercies; casting their crowns at his feet, and singing, Glory, honour, dominion, and power, be unto the Lamb for ever and ever!

“Once they were wrestlers here below,
And spread their couch with tears;
They wrestled hard, as we do now,
With sins, and doubts, and fears.

“I ask’d them whence their Victory came;
They, with united breath,
Ascribe their glory to the Lamb,
Their triumph to his Death.”

How blessedly for my beloved and deeply lamented
father is the promise fulfilled!

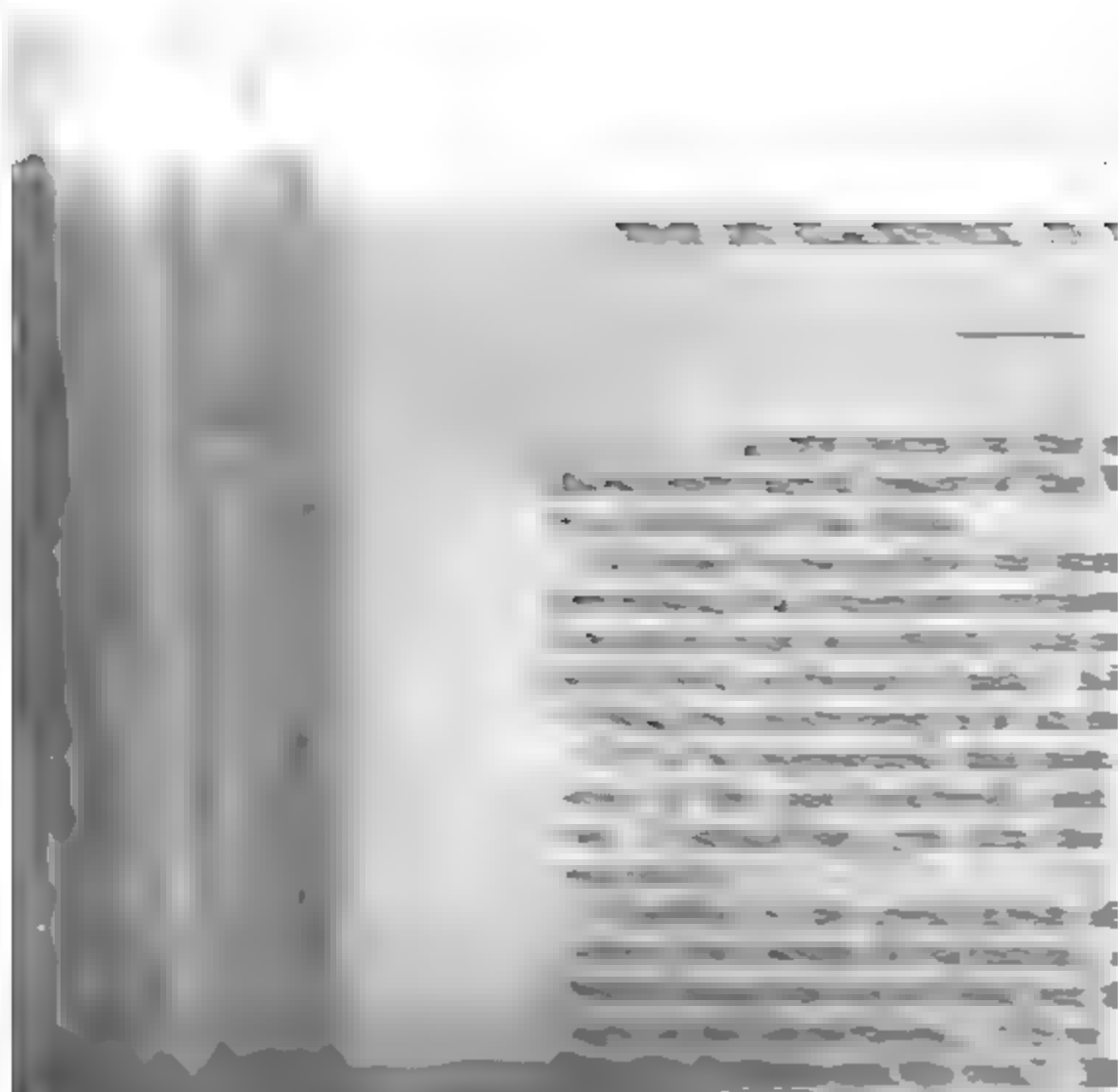
“The vision is for an appointed time.”

Faith is indeed swallowed in VICTORY now!

I often think I shall never hear such preaching as his
again, it was truly “clean provender winnowed with the
shovel and the fan.” Yes, he often came laden with
Gospel blessings, and GLAD tidings.

How frequently do I think of that sweet little Salem
chapel—that sacred spot, where I had the PRESENCE of the
Lord, and where I enjoyed so many sweet days of the Son
of Man!

EMMA.



understood, it does not discourage an every true seeker is sure to find. V upon the name of the Lord shall be as build in the worst sense, all the body were predestinarians, and I am deeply upon their foundation.

My friend, search the Scriptures well are so. Redemption is particular. S men. Why, then, are not all men t tion is designed equally for all men, an saved and another is not, who, or who cuse in those who are saved? In the difference. Both God make the differ ticular redemption.

Some mistaken men harp upon the that man is little acquainted with Sc not that all, in many parts of Scrip every individual of our race. It is (mischievous—**all His SHEEP**. Isaiah lii • I lay down my life for the sheep— **gave His life for the sheep.**

In the great day, this glorious Shep the "sheep" put the sheep, around him tation and security: their persons He rep He bore in His body on the tree. His blood of humanity remained untainted body saw no corruption! Their sins were—received all the punishment d

He died, and by his death fully redemption. There, on the blessed transgressions—made an end of sin— **had overruled** the works of darkness **principles** and powers. There, H they, He **fulfilled** the Father's—ma **God loves**—not every pe **is most precious** Here, y

honourable men ; and there, are honourable women not a few.

To raise a king from his throne, or a beggar from his dunghill, is what He has stooped to do. How many of the self-righteous have felt his mighty hand upon them to strip and to humble them. By the *power* of his *grace*, the wise man owns his folly ; the righteous man sees his rags ; the holy man, his corruption ; the weak man, his weakness ; the swift man, his lameness.

It is his prerogative to look on him that is *proud* and lofty, and *abase* him. Are any of his licentious ? He will sanctify them ; David shall repent of his two-fold crime—adultery and murder ; Solomon shall leave his mistresses and his fooleries. Manasseh shall pray—that whale shall be tackled—that monster in crime shall bow the suppliant knee. If Peter thrice deny his Lord and Master, his Master cannot deny himself the pleasure of looking upon Peter : by grace he shall find repentance and pardon. Here is little Zacchæus, that extortioner. He is found even in the sycamore-tree. “Come down, Zacchæus !”

Yonder is Rahab, the harlot, and Mary, the sinner, out of whom went seven devils. There stands a group who were once Corinthian rebels—read the black list of their transgressions ; but even they are washed. And who is that that says, he is “the least of all saints ?” and who claims for himself the abasing appellation of the Chief of Sinners ?

It is Paul—the brier, the thorn, now green as the fir-tree, and fragrant as the sweet-scented myrtle. This wise man is become a FOOL for Christ’s sake !—this Pharisee has doffed his rags, and put the more seemly robe of Christ upon him. The lion is become a lamb, the persecutor of the Church, a gentle nursing father. Once he despised and hated nothing so much as the Cross of Christ ; now he glories in nothing else.

And O, my soul, there was a time, when thou couldst sport with the Scriptures, and wanton with the wounds of Christ ; alas, I was one of them of whom Mr. Hart says—

"Man view'd unmoved thy blood's rich stream,
Nor ever dreamt it flow'd for him."

I had just as much hand in my conversion, as the creation had in its formation!

For PERSEVERANCE where shall we look? Why, to the GRACE that first quickened us. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delighteth in his way; though he fall, yet shall he not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." Thus, we are freely saved by grace—Halleluia!—Amen!

I am sure if God take me to heaven, it will be a wonder to men and angels—but the greatest wonder of all to myself!

I have been much tempted and harassed since I saw you; I have got nothing more than hope at present.

It is written, "He putteth his mouth into the dust, if so be there may be HOPE."

"O that my soul could love and praise Him more,
His beauties trace, his majesty adore—
Live near his heart, upon his bosom lean,
Obey his voice, and all his will esteem."

But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Trusting that you have the fear of God in your hearts, I exhort you to the exercise of SECRET PRAYER and reading the Scriptures. Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find. . . .

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

1832.

. . . . You wish me to give my thoughts on the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel; I wish I could do so in few words.

The address is to the inhabitants of the land of Israel.

lies (in the name of the Lord), and thus to bolster them up in a FALSE and EMPTY PROFESSION.

The meaning of the thirtieth and thirty-first verses, I take to be as follows. — Here God is expostulating with the wicked — “Thou sayest thou hast will and power, to turn to me, and do this, and that. Therefore repent—turn—cast away your transgressions—yea, make you a new heart and a new spirit—do these things—for why will ye die when ye may live by exerting your so much vaunted power and goodness?”

Thus God deals with these vain braggadocios. But O, my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united.

Last verse, “I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth.” God is not honoured by a wicked man’s life, nor by his death. In his life or in his death, God takes no pleasure. The wicked man dieth as a fool dieth. The Lord’s pleasure is in his people, and God says (and they are awful words), “He will laugh at the calamity of the wicked, and mock when their fear cometh.”

Again, “Turn, and live ye.” Arminians in all ages have said, THEY could turn and live, when they pleased to do so! Here, God seems to say, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee! Working, and TALKING about working, are two things, as every master or mistress knows. Here then, ye boasters, saith God, “Repent, turn, forsake your sins; make you a new heart, and live!” That is the Arminian’s everlasting task (as every one knows who has really tried to accomplish it). But many think they can do this or that, because they NEVER TRIED. All true believers declare man to be IMPOTENT! So do all REAL Gospel ministers—so doth the written Word.

Now, as Dives gave the lie to Father Abraham, even so will these give the lie to Moses, the prophets, and to God himself! Oh, horrible presumption! Surely there is a day coming, when many will wish they had never been born, rather than that they should have intruded themselves into things not seen, being vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds!

Perhaps my friend will think I take pleasure in bearing

hard upon the Arminians ; the truth is, I hate their DOCTRINE. I know if that be true, my faith and profession are vain, and I am yet in my sins ! Wherefore I give it as my conviction, that either the Arminian scheme is a FALSEHOOD, or the Bible is untrue ! I have no doubt some, yea, many of God's people, have been Arminians many years ; to these God says, "Come ye out from among them." And I believe that sooner or later (before death), He will bring his children out of that awful delusion.

But whilst I hate the doctrine of Arminius, I do not allow myself to JUDGE any man's state. When it is my lot to meet with the Freewiller, I wish to be faithful with him ; and when he is dead, to leave him to the judgment-seat of Christ ; but I never profit by the conversation or company of such men.

You wish me to give my thoughts upon 1 Cor. xiii. 2 : "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains." To remove a mountain would be to work a miracle. I believe the faith here spoken of, is that which wrought miracles. That was the faith of Jannes and Jambres. Many will say, We have prophesied in thy name, in thy name have cast out devils, and wrought many wonderful works ; that is, wrought miracles.

The faith that worketh miracles, is distinct from that which saveth the soul. If a man have one grain of TRUE faith, he shall be saved ; but here is a faith which a man may have, and yet be damned, therefore it must be the faith of devils. If it were "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," how could the man be lost, seeing that he that believeth shall be saved ? The truth is, there is a NATURAL dead faith—a faith that worketh miracles—no matter whether they are true, or only "lying wonders," whether they are wrought in London, in Scotland, or at Rome ; there is no charity, no true love in the worker, no love to God, to Christ, his doctrine, his cross, or his people.

If a man have no true love to the image of God, (though he may preach and look like an angel,) even supposing his miracle-faith was so strong as to rend the loftiest moun-

tains from their seats he is suffering and nothing but a scolding brass and a wrack.

This text is sometimes thrown at those who have false charity.—What is that?—A false possession to love all of every sect, paragon of Christians, whatever their creed, loving those who love the truth, the DISCREET God—those who hate and work against possible evil, with might and main.

Is not this the charity of the Pharisee in his own heart? If my heart receive God, I love his doctrine, his truth, his pe- I love my man that loves and loves the Yea, I wish to love the IMAGE of Christ without any other limitation.

I can see the image of Christ in some there is a deal of iron, yet I love these peo- ing between their persons and their errors, some do man for his religion, however fight against his errors, but with one sword only—the word of God.

These words show that love is a great believe—that is well. But do we love? A man may believe that Jesus is the Christ, loved him, but do man can love Jesus, not believe in him. There is no minister has not faith of some sort. But—Love is a great mystery. And he who loves the Son the measure of his sin, and the dearest.

I do not expect that my remarks will as you are brought to, your lost ex- experience is the art of the knowledge myself a fool, without righteousness, a strength. I can embrace Christ as my re- man, holiness, help, and strength—then H. The plan of GRACE does not defend me, o other basis: the doctrines of grace is o they are my meat and drink. It is nec- and to these things, and necessity keeps m

But I hope that God has begun his good work in your soul. The Gospel is a wide field of knowledge, you may soon get lost in it. There are "MANY things hard to be understood." Christ says, "I have many things to say and to judge of you, but ye cannot bear it now." If you are led to look well to your own heart and way, you will go safely along.

Prayer is a most glorious exercise—may you never neglect that. Go to God, tell Him humbly and simply what you fear, what you feel, and what you desire—as far as you can, tell Him ALL; plead in the name of Jesus, and remember that you are conversing with your Father who is in heaven, who is able to do exceeding abundantly, and not slack in fulfilling his promise. Prayer is the never-failing remedy for all your complaints.

In reading the precious word, you will sweetly and humbly depend on the teachings of your heavenly Father; take what He sends with thankfulness. If He withholds the knowledge of anything from you, perhaps it is for your good. We wisely keep the knowledge of many of our family concerns from our children—so doth God.

If you and I are led to wait humbly upon God for knowledge, He will not leave us ignorant of anything that could be good for us to know.

. . . .

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

1833.

. . . . THERE are especially two things, which I know and feel this day—viz. my spiritual malady, and the preciousness of the blood of Christ.

In self I am guilty, dark, deserted, polluted, dull, cold, insipid, unbelieving, treacherous, wandering, rebellious, light, vain, inconstant, frothy, unclean, corrupt, envious, murmuring, carnal, and full of enmity. But blessed be my God! I feel that I greatly NEED the fountain.

I have a strong desire that the Holy Spirit would condescend to baptize me, or, in other words, take and put

destruction must come upon his whole house. Abijah his son is taken sick, his time is come, but he is to die a natural death, "because in him there is found **SOME GOOD THING** towards the Lord God of Israel." There is no good thing in the heart of any child of Adam, save what God has put therein; He puts a good desire into the heart, and then takes special notice of it. Now, I think you will not say that you have not in your heart a **DESIRE** to fear the Lord. Yet even that desire, small as it is, springs from the grace of God, and grace is the blossom bud of glory.

Wherever a poor sensibly lost sinner hath in his heart a desire for the finished salvation of Jesus, there is a blessed work of grace commenced, which the Lord will never overlook. Nay, I will be so bold as to affirm, that wherever there is a feeling of one's **LOST** state as a sinner, and a desire of grace, there is **LIFE**, there is spiritual life, for the genuine **DESIRE** of grace, is **GRACE**.

In the smoking flax, a little love underneath is the fire, and desires, the smoke, proceeding therefrom. Men and devils cannot quench this little fire, and Jesus will not. A reed is certainly not the emblem of strength, but of weakness; yet even a reed shaken with the wind, and bruised by temptation—which one would think to be altogether useless—Jesus preserves, and tends with the greatest care. This word stands to his eternal honour, "The bruised reed he will not break, the smoking flax he will not quench, until he send judgment unto victory."

Hear the opposite language of unbelief and faith, in Manoah and his wife. "We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these." A soul that renounces worldly wisdom, for that which is from above; human merit, as vile refuse, for the righteousness that justifies the ungodly; creature holiness, as corruption, for the pure image of Jesus; knocks at mercy's door, and

craves redemption full and free ; who hankers after Christ, and looks for all in Him,—**MUST** ultimately succeed.

Is not this your case, my friend ? Wait on the Lord, He shall give you the desires of your heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord, “The promise may be long delayed,” but cannot come too late. Follow on, my friend. Give Him no rest. “Our Joseph turns aside to weep, but cannot long refrain.” Follow him as did the two poor blind men. “Have mercy on us, thou Son of David :” and if any should try to silence you, cry out so much the more, and He will turn again and have compassion on you. O remember, He said not to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.

Thousands have been in a condition as hopeless, as discouraging as yours, and when every other means have failed, they have by grace fled to Jesus for refuge. Go you, and do likewise, and, as the Lord liveth, you shall not be disappointed ! for they that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

Thus have I tried, instrumentally, to stimulate you in the good ways of God, deriving some encouragement to do so from these words, “If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul ; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday.” I should be very glad to receive a few lines from you concerning the frame of your mind, and the exercises of your soul, but that I leave with you.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

II.—*To the same.*

Potton, 1833.

. In looking over your case as described in your letter, it appears to me to contain several solid evidences of real Christianity.

All the Lord’s children complain of darkness and blindness. “Whereas I was **BLIND**, now I **SEE**.” See what ?

Why! that I was once blind. You believe, there is a **REALITY** in religion which you have never **FELT**. I like to hear of a man's being in love with a **FEELING** religion.

You have a hope, but you are afraid it is not a good one. If it rests upon the person, obedience and blood of Christ alone, it is "a **GOOD** hope through **grace**." The devil will be sure to try and dash it, but it "maketh not ashamed;" and, O, remember, that in the absence of the full **ASSURANCE** of faith, "We are saved by **HOPE**:" that hope, many a poor soul has found, even when he has had the cord round his neck with the intent to commit a dreadful suicidal act.

You desire to be brought to the **LIGHT**. Is not that a solid evidence! Hear what Christ says, "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd; but he that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." You have a desire to be **SEARCHED**. David's prayer is, "Search me, O God," &c. This he says, not as a natural, but as a spiritual man; not as a dead sinner, but as a living saint in Jerusalem. Your heart responds to his prayer. Are you not in the footsteps of the flock? Is it not written, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!" "Be not faithless, but believing!" May our gracious God work in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure: you have got the **WILL**, but not the power: let me tell you, you are like many of your brethren in this respect, for instance, brother Paul, "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not."

You desire that God would **SHINE** upon you—David is just a little way before you. "Make thy face to shine upon thy servant."

That the light of God's countenance is more to you in all temporal prosperity—tell me, is that a sign of life

? You can join with the poet:

'Oh! for a glance of heavenly day,
To take this stubborn stone away.'

More work for Jesus of Nazareth. You moreover can add,

“Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove,
With all thy quickening powers.”

Now, if you ask your heavenly Father for bread, will He give you a stone? or, for a fish, will He give you a serpent? Go on, my friend, to pray for his RESURRECTION POWER, because when there is casting down, men shall say there is lifting up.

You are “shut up and cannot come forth.” No! But Jesus keeps the KEYS of your prison-house. It is His province to “loose the prisoners,” therefore the captive exile shall not die in the pit. Prisoner of hope! you are encouraged to turn to your strong hold.

Wait upon the Lord, therefore, He will give you the desire of your heart; wait I say upon the Lord. Your Captain will soon appear, and say to law and justice, “Loose him, and let him go.”

“The promise may be long delay’d,
But cannot come too late.”

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

III.—*To the same.*

1836.*

GRACE, mercy, and peace be with you, your dear family, and all the family and flock of God at Lakenheath. May the best of blessings rest upon you, and may the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush be for ever towards you!

I desire to love you all, rich and poor, old and young, weak and strong, with an equal, steady, and impartial love.

Very pleasant have ye been to me, my dear brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus. The Lord of his free grace and mercy recompense your work, and a full free grace

* These letters, though out of place in point of date, are placed together.

reward be given to you of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to trust.

Full often, when I have been in trouble, I have derived some consolation that I had a few warm friends in and about Lakenheath, who, had they been near me, would have sympathised with me in my trials, condoled with me in my sorrows, and helped me in their prayers to God.

I account this a great mercy, for which I desire to be very thankful to the Father of mercies—

“Blest be the dear uniting love,
That will not let us part.”

I reckon you my fellow-helpers. Let brotherly love continue. Brethren, pray for me, for I trust I have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly

. . . . At this moment I am crouching down between two burdens. I see that rest is good, and the land to be desired; and I praise the dead that are already dead more than the living that are yet alive. To tell you the truth I have a hard matter to keep from saying with Job, “I am weary of my life,” though my better judgment tells me this is WRONG. I wish to say with him, If a man die shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. On the glorious morning of the resurrection, “Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee; thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.”

But still, if you would indulge me, I should say—“O ye spirits of just men made perfect, who are now before our Father’s throne, how happy, how supremely blessed are ye! Once, like us, ye did eat the bread of adversity, and drink the water of affliction—now, above the reach of sorrow and sighing, you are at the banquetting table, feasting on royal dainties. Once you were here below, suffering the deepest distresses from poverty, shame, pain, sin, an evil heart, a tempting devil, a frowning world, mocking Ishmaels, Sarah’s angry children, and the scourge of a Father’s rod.

“ Did you not then feel as we feel, sigh as we sigh, groan as we groan, fear as we fear, and doubt as we doubt? And even when hope was not quite dead, did not Giant Despair sometimes show you the bones in the castle-yard—the bones of professors that have perished in their deceivings, and tell you that you would soon be like them? Did he not sometimes beat you with his grievous crab-tree cudgel, till the perspiration came through every pore?

“ But now, O ye happy souls, you have got above the reach of the world, the devil, unbelief and sin—above the suspicions of friends, and the malice of enemies, the storms of life and the rage of hell. When death had unlocked your prisons of clay, your released souls did find themselves in your Father’s state carriage, surrounded by a troop of angels bright and fair, who conveyed you to the gates of heaven, and into your Father’s bosom, where you soon lost all unpleasant remembrance of the former things.

“ Illustrious travellers! who have reached the end of your toilsome pilgrimage. O blessed voyagers that have got into your fair haven! O! noble band of martyrs, confessors, sufferers, and conquerors, now enthroned in glory! O ye favoured spirits of the just, who are now with your Redeemer! O blessed children, that have reached your Father’s arms, praise Him, praise Him, bless Him—bless Him that has given you the start of us!

“ We, your poor brethren who are in the vale of tears, cannot praise Him as we would, such fools and so slow of heart to believe are we! Alas!

‘ Our harps are on the willows hung,
And Esau vows our death.’

“ But you, our glorified brethren, you can praise and bless Him. Lift up, lift up your immortal, your melodious voices, and praise and bless Him for us.

“ Every moment brings us a moment nearer to you: we trust we shall soon be with you, and all our Father’s elect family shall ‘ draw after ’ us; and then, you, and we, and they, as the children of one happy family, no longer parted,

shall unite to prostrate ourselves before our ever lovely Jesus.

“ We will together cast our crowns at his feet ; we will adore Him, and say, Worthy is the Lamb, for He was slain, and hath redeemed us. Our united hearts, harps and voices, with those of the angelic hosts, shall fill heaven and eternity in singing loud and sweet Hallelujahs unto God and the Lamb. We shall for ever adore our triune Jehovah.”

I thought in this epistle to have said something about my trials, which are not light at this time in their weight, nor few in their number ; however, they are numbered and meted out by that wisdom which cannot err.

But my thoughts took their flight and got to heaven, so that I have not said what I intended to say. Perhaps it is all for the best, for I have already sent you many a sorrowful epistle, but I know your kindness will bear with me, your mantle of brotherly love will cover my faults and plead for my infirmities. You, my brethren, will not wound a conscience that is already galled. God has taught you better than to pursue a withered leaf ! You will PRAY for me to the good Samaritan, that He may come with his oil and wine and heal my wounds ; and I have this consolation, that ere very long I shall be “ where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest,” where I shall no longer hear the voice of the oppressor.

I write from the place where two seas meet, and remain ever yours in Jesus.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

IV.—*To the same.*

1837.

. . . . With regard to your present state of mind, my dear brother, I wish to say a few things for your encouragement, hoping that the Lord may bless them to you.

In some cases, the work of God is sooner discovered by a looker-on, than by the person who is the subject of it. God's work is only made manifest in God's light. God gives LIFE before He gives light. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." There are often both life and feeling, where light is wanted to show that this work is the work of God.

Why is it that you reverence the Most High?—Why do you desire a tender conscience?—Why do you hate sin?—or, when you cannot find that you hate it, why do you DESIRE to hate it? How comes it that you hate free will and merit?—Why do you love the saints above all other men and women upon earth?—Why is it that you secretly wish to be like them, so far as they follow Christ?—Why are you more dark and dead in your feelings at one time than another?—Why are you uneasy when you feel your state and your burden; and why are you uneasy when you feel them NOT?

How is it that you dread carnally SECURE frames?—How is it that you dread presumption?—Why is Christ, now and then, PRECIOUS to you in your feelings—more precious than your money, or your life?—What would you take for Him?—Why is it that you cannot live without prayer?—Why is it that now and then you take more delight in waiting upon God than in anything else?—Why are you cast down when you go away from prayer, or from hearing?—Is it not because the Lord did not MANIFEST HIMSELF TO YOU?—Why are you in trouble when Jesus seems to frown upon you? and why do you secretly rejoice when you are raised to a comfortable hope?—Why is your hope of mercy in Christ alone?

Are not these THREE desires, now and then found in your heart, that the Lord Jesus Christ would be pleased savingly to MANIFEST Himself unto you, KEEP you from all unto death, and TAKE you to heaven when you die?

And what is it now that would raise your soul to a transport of joy, but this, that Jesus should REVEAL HIMSELF to you, and enable you to say with experimental evidence of Him whom your soul loveth—"My beloved is

mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies." Does not your soul now and then, in some little measure, in some poor faint way, thus thirst for God, for the living God!

If your breast has not, at one time or another, been the seat of all these desires, I have missed my mark! As the Lord thy God liveth, these are the EFFECTS of the Holy Spirit's quickening power, saving grace, and sovereign operations; and it is your privilege, and the privilege of all such as have known these things to say, Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.

Fear not, O thou of little faith! Wherefore dost thou doubt?

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

V.—*To the same.*

1837.

. . . . I FEEL but ill qualified for writing: may the Lord's all-sufficiency furnish me with power and unctuous matter, that what I write may be made very profitable to you.

You will readily acknowledge that it is a great thing to be CALLED from a state of SIN and IGNORANCE, into the marvellous light of the Gospel. From a state of SIN—because however decent a youth may be before conversion, in his external deportment, you are well aware that his life is wholly a life of sinning and rebellion against God. All his thoughts, affections, words and actions, are not only sinful, but they are nothing but SIN in the sight of a holy God. The best action of our lives deserves eternal damnation. This you see and believe.

From a state of IGNORANCE also—for the best informed youth in a state of nature is very ignorant of the glorious holiness of God, of the sinfulness of sin, of the sins of his own life, and especially of the sins of his own HEART, therefore he is proud and lifted up. And is he not perfectly ignorant of the mercies of God in Christ?—he knows nothing of the benefits of a Mercy-seat, nothing of God as a dear Father, nothing of Christ revealed to the soul as

a sweet Saviour, nothing of pardon and peace, nothing of power and unction, nothing of walking with God, or of fellowship with the Spirit! He knows nothing of grace and mercy, or of the sweetness of divine love, when shed abroad in the heart. In a word, he knows nothing of the mystery of the Gospel, of the nature of true holiness, the blessedness of heaven, or of the way to it.

Every unconverted person is ignorant of the revelation of that righteousness which is the saints' title to heaven, and is also a stranger to that holiness which renders the saints meet for heaven. The light that is in him is only darkness, and therefore, how GREAT is that darkness!

To bring the soul from this state of ignorance, sin, and death, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, is a very GREAT WORK. Be it remembered that it is God's own work, and He will take his own time in the doing of it. Now, I have this confidence that God has sovereignly QUICKENED your soul, and I will try to prove it; and may the Holy Spirit grant us his precious unctuous light.

Has He not shown you that this world is a sinful, vain, and empty world, unsatisfying, delusive, and perishing, so that at times you dread the thoughts of having to be exposed to it, and would sooner die at once than be deluded by it? Do you not also see, that there is nothing which can separate a man from God but sin, and therefore that SIN is the worst thing upon the earth?

Do you not find that it clings very closely to you? You would fain serve it as Paul did the viper, (shake it off,) but you cannot, it over-masters you. Do you not believe that sin is your worst enemy, and especially the sin of unbelief? Do you not sometimes hate sin, and loath yourself on account of it? And are you not often afraid that you have never seen its exceeding sinfulness, and that you have never hated it perfectly? You would WISH to hate it, as you hate the devil. You never see it as you would see it, nor hate it as you would hate it; nor do you ever loath and abhor yourself as you could wish.

Do you not sometimes feel that you can neither believe, nor repent, nor pray, nor turn to God, if it were to save

But not, those things are done
Though you think you know the
The mystery of the world is a
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last. It is nearer day-break than you think it is, for the Day-spring from on high has surely visited you. It is your privilege to say, I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord—

“However sinful, weak, and poor,
Still wait and pray at mercy’s door—
Faithful Jehovah must remain,
Nor shalt thou seek his face in vain.”

As the Lord shall help you, still keep begging and praying, waiting, hoping, trusting and cleaving, “For he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. There is a set time to favour Zion,” and a set-time to favour THEE. The Lord only waits to be gracious. Even now, He is ON HIS WAY. The hour of your deliverance comes on apace, every day brings you a day nearer to it.

If you can help it, do not indulge in hard thoughts of God, do not NURSE unbelief, doubts and fears; “be not faithless, but believing;” grieve not the Holy Spirit of God by evil questionings, and sullen behaviour—remember, that, Blessed is she (and consequently, blessed is he) that believeth.

Remember that unbelief, pride, and rebellion, are three of the greatest stumbling-blocks in your way: pray frequently and fervently for what you feel your need of, pray for a tender conscience and a closer walk with God.

Consider these things, and the Lord give thee an understanding in all things.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

LETTERS TO FRIENDS.

1834.

MAY the good Lord furnish me with the well-spring of wisdom, and make it as a flowing brook! May the Lord the Spirit counsel me, that I may counsel you—that I may be as the mouth of God to comfort you!

of God, try to believe on Jesus for life and salvation. Say, "Lord, help me to believe." When doubt, fears and unbelief prevail, ask the Lord for faith and patience; when you can for a few moments rely upon Christ for salvation, eternal life, ask for the blessed Spirit to come and bear WITNESS that you are a child of God, and to give you pardon, peace, and the joy of salvation.

Until the good Lord grants you these privileges—PRAY. Read the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, and the Book of Psalms. Frequently reading the Scriptures with earnest prayer, depending entirely upon the SPIRIT'S teaching for these holy exercises, will inspire a lively hope and true confidence. Prov. iii. 5. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge HIM, and he shall direct thy paths." Read the whole chapter, as all the direction, instruction, and consolation it contains belongs to you.

Seek peace, and you shall obtain it. The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry. But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

Grow in GRACE, is a sweet word, and God is fulfilling it in you.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

1834.

..... WALKING by faith seems hard work when the path is rugged, and lies up the hill! I feel that I am no adept in the knowledge of the doctrine of Divine Providence: I once thought that I could have almost written a "Bank of Faith," but alas,

"I find myself a learner yet,
Unskilful, weak, and apt to slide!"

It is much easier to preach faith, than to practise it, when under heavy trials. I feel myself weaker than ever, and
a beetle, in the school of Christ.

One of the greatest doctrines in the Bible is that of God's PREDESTINATION, but oh, how slow have I been to learn it, even although I know it to be a never-failing source of consolation! But a gracious covenant God will bring the blind by a way that they knew not.

I think it a great mercy that I do not doubt my interest in Christ, as I am in rough storms, and boisterous seas . . . no earnest of deliverance. I believe He will make a way of escape, so that I shall be able to bear it. "For when the Lord's people have need, his goodness will make out a way."

I believe that "it is in the mount that the Lord shall be seen." I desire to go on hoping and trusting, knowing that it is his part to work a deliverance. All the assistance that I need from you, my friend, is the benefit of your prayers. You will kindly grant me that. And I shall be thankful for it; we know no want.

I have never known the want of any temporal good thing, since I have been in the ministry, although the Lord sent me out without a shilling. I have been in straits and difficulties many a time, but have ALWAYS been delivered. How often, after a deliverance, have those words followed me, "When I sent you out without scrip or money lacked ye anything? and they said, Nothing, Lord." O, blessed be the name of my God. He has amply provided for me and mine. He has watched o'er us with a Father's care.

I am not so much troubled at present about HOW we shall subsist, as WHERE we shall subsist; for, whether my journeyings will be east, west, north, or south, I know no more than Abraham did, when he went out not knowing whither he went. I desire to say with Mr. Hart, "Choose *Thou* the way, but still lead on."

I will try to turn the subject to my text yesterday, Prov. viii. 20, 21, "I lead in the way of righteousness," &c. This is the language of wisdom. This wisdom is justified of her children, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom."

Here is our most glorious Christ. The blessed God-man.

As God, He is the fountain of uncreated and eternal wisdom. As man, he is specially taught by the Father, "He wakeneth me morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." With Him is the perfection of wisdom.

He says, "I lead," &c. What majesty there is in this sublime language! The Father has given Him, as a leader and as a commander unto the people. He leads in his own person, by the power of his Spirit, and by his good providence. Glory be to God! as to the I AM, He leads all his elect, all his sinner train! None can describe his beauty, dignity, suitableness, glory, and majesty. O, how delightful is this vision, when seen by the eye of faith, and in the light of the Holy Spirit!

"Jesus, the vision of thy face
Hath o'erpowering charms;
Scarce shall I feel Death's cold embrace,
If Christ be in my arms!"

Jesus, the God, assumes human nature—takes by imputation the transgressions of the church—appears in our law-place—gloriously fulfils it in his active obedience—endures the contradiction of sinners. As Judah's lion, raging among their ranks, he spoils principalities and powers—flings the sable legions into the nethermost hell—endures the hidings of his Father's face—is baptized in the deep floods of penal wrath—agonizes in the garden, and on the cross—sheds his most precious, precious blood—passes into the arms of the king of terrors—disarms him—descends into the cold grave, and bursts from his confinement.

He RISES! behold he rises, like a triumphant conqueror! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen! The Lord is risen!

The Lord is risen! Lo, our Saviour drowns in his blood the offences of his people, provides for them a covering—the raiment of needlework—a glorious wedding garment, and completes the work of eternal salvation.

Thus He, having fulfilled the law, appeased stern justice.

g honoured each divine person, and every divine
 ate, having pulled the house upon the heads of the
 of the Philistines, having blotted out the score,
 aving nailed the debt book to his cross, our captive
 s our CAPTAIN, our warrior, our conqueror ; carrying
 ecious robe over the arm of his might, bearing
 on like) triumphantly upon his shoulders the gates
 a. See, captivity is taken captive ! The sting of
 is removed, the grave is richly embalmed. Principa-
 powers, as a part of his train, hide their diminished
 under the chariot wheels of this illustrious con-

fully exhibiting his scars, He approaches the portals
 even. It is the King of Glory ! from millions of
 . The sound shakes the high arches of the vaulted
 as. It is the King of Glory ! The shining ranks fall
 ate to receive Him.

God-man takes his seat upon his Father's right.
 at a smile beams from the Father's face ! its beams
 helm the spirits of the just. "Well done, my Son,
 one."

is lovely Jesus fulfils his word, "I lead in the way of
 ousness." Now Patriarchs, and Prophets, and holy
 the spirits of the just, feast their eyes upon Emma-
 and there, as with one heart and voice, break forth
 song, the song of Moses and the Lamb.

nder sits the Father of the faithful—that is Jacob the
 ler—there sits David, Israel's sweet singer—there is
 Job, the man of patience—there sits the Jewish law-
 unveiled—that is Hezekiah, at whose powerful prayer
 un backed his chariot wheels—there is Manasseh
 ating himself, wearing a robe as white as the driven
 in Salmon. Who sings a bolder note ?

it is Isaiah, the Old Testament Evangelist ; and
 r is Elias : he is not now taunting the prophets of
 or lashing them with his irony ; he is more sweetly
 oyed—he worships the Lamb !

at an illustrious choir of blessed singers did the Old
 ment saints make ! O, what noble melody ! every

soul is in time—not a single discordant sound of free-will and merit. Sovereign GRACE is the key note! How well they sing together, “Worthy the Lamb!” And lo! yonder is the grand orchestra of elect angels. O, my soul when shall I their chorus join!

But I must break off; I have lost myself and my friend too, in contemplating Him, who “leads in the way of righteousness.”

. . . .

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

1834.

. . . . YOUR last letter, in my opinion, evidences a gradual growth in grace. I suppose you will say, Indeed it is GRADUAL! but I do assure you that in general I find a gradual growth the best, even as you see it is in plants.

In my short time, I have seen several very promising characters, who have by no means answered my expectations of them, whilst their more lowly neighbours, though far less promising, have stood. And why should they not since God is able to make them stand. “And to Him the weakest is dear as the strong.” Now, if there be in the flock one more weak than the rest, He carries that one in his arms, folds it in his bosom, and seems as if he never could make enough of it.

What an unspeakable mercy is it to you, that God should quicken you by his Spirit, call you by his grace, bring you to his throne, and authorize you to call Him Father! To call you to Him in the time of your youth, and sweetly empower you to say, “MY FATHER, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth!” Surely those words belong to you. And be ye THANKFUL for your election, redemption, vocation, and full and free salvation—thankful for a free pardon, the peace of God, justification and sanctification—thankful for providential and temporal mercies—thankful for the unspeakable gift, Christ Jesus, a throne of grace, the holy word, the blessed Spirit, and the hope of glory.

NOW SWEET it is to be THANKFUL! When the love of

God is shed abroad in our hearts, we hardly know where to begin, or where to make an end. O, how sweet it is for Zion's babes and sucklings to sing Hosanna, when the King of Saints rides on before them! "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice!"

"O for this love, let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break."

"Let everything that hath breath praise the name of the Lord."

You have requested me to give you my thoughts upon Jer. xvii. 10. I will endeavour to do so. "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, EVEN to GIVE EVERY MAN ACCORDING to HIS WAYS, and ACCORDING to the FRUIT of his DOINGS." You, I have no doubt, wished for an explanation of the sentences I have marked.

The passage above cited shows how God will deal with those who die out of Christ. In eternity they shall know that God punishes the wicked for HEART SINS, as well as for sinful actions. All who die out of Christ die under the law. The law takes cognizance of sinful THOUGHTS and INCLINATIONS, as certainly as it does of sinful actions. "To give to every man,"—every man OUT of Christ, every man at the left hand of Christ, in the judgment; not to every man that is IN Christ, or indeed to any man that is in Christ, for then Paul himself must be condemned, for in his flesh dwelt no good thing.

Christ took upon Himself all the sins of all God's elect, suffered for those sins, and expiated them by his blood. In behalf of every one of the elect, law and justice received at the hands of Christ full payment, and

"Payment God cannot twice demand—
First, at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine."

For "who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" seeing it is God that justifieth.

If the saints stand before the judgment-seat at the last, it will only be to afford an opportunity for men and devils

to witness their full, free, and final justification; for ^{as} CHRIST IS, so are they in this world; and as Christ is, ^{so} will they appear at the judgment. He must present them FAULTLESS before his Father with exceeding joy; and ^{if} so, they cannot be tried for heart sins there.

They are tried here, they are judged here, they are here brought to repentance for heart sins, as really as for outward sins. Nay, they are even chastened for heart sins. I have thought that in this life only, God punishes one of his own children ten times more for HEART SINS, than He does for outward sins, and yet there is not one drop of vindictive wrath in their cup! It is the KIND hand of a kind Father that chastens them, and every stroke he gives them, goes to his own heart.

They are pardoned here, they are justified freely by grace here. They have passed from death unto life, they shall never come into condemnation, they shall never perish; therefore the words to which you have referred me, must be understood to apply only unto such as die in their sins.

There are TWO "ALLS," TWO WORLDS, and TWO distinct manner of people, spoken of in the Word. Words and phrases have a very different usage in the Scriptures, to what they have in what grammarians would call, strict propriety of language. If the mystery and meaning of the Scriptures were as easily understood as the LETTER of Scripture is read, we should not NEED the Holy Ghost to teach us. The contrary, however, is the case; for no man can know the mind of God in the Holy Scriptures, but as he is taught it for HIMSELF, BY THE BLESSED SPIRIT.

May you be favoured to seek peace and ensue it, as being in Christ freely justified by grace. Entreat the Lord by his Spirit to write in your heart the sweet precepts of the Gospel, and especially the kindly law of love. Pray for an enlightened, tender conscience, and endeavour to look well to it; and should the heavenly Bridegroom for the trial of your faith, go away for a little while, and leave his sweet peace behind him in your soul, be very

Thankful for it, carefully shun whatever is calculated to remove it from you ; walk in truth—walk in love—walk in peace.

May the Lord confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless at the coming of Christ

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

1834.

. . . . I WILL now, for your encouragement, try to explain the way of salvation as explicitly as I can in the short compass of a letter. . . .

The obedience the law requires, is PERFECT love, both to God and man. God could neither ask more than this, nor could he take less. The principles of the law were interwoven with Adam's make. Obedience to it was natural to him. Life was promised as the reward of his obedience : death was threatened as the bitter fruit of his disobedience ; therefore, the way of WORKS is the ancient way of happiness, but it failed. Man sinned freely, yet awfully, and as he was the common parent and the representative of mankind, the whole race of men fell in him.

Man was originally able to keep the law, but the fall, by corrupting his nature, destroyed that ability. Still, the authority of the law is unaltered and unalterable. Men are not condemned for their not believing the Gospel, but for their breaking the law. Sin is disobedience to the law, and death is the wages of sin. This death is the loss of all temporal enjoyments in this present life, and the wrath and curse of God, in body and soul, in the life to come.

God had been holy and just if all mankind had forever perished in their sins. As all men are equally fallen, if one man might justly suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, it follows so might all our race. Therefore, whoever is saved, is saved as an act of purely free grace and mercy. Man in the fall, has neither power nor will to help himself ; he can neither atone for his past offences, nor keep the law for the future ; consequently salvation cannot be obtained by the law.

All the use which the Holy Spirit now makes of the law, is to convince and condemn the sinner, and thereby bring him to despair of helping himself in anywise. When the sinner is brought to know and feel his lost and helpless condition, he must look to some other quarter for help.

Now, Christ has wrought out a complete salvation for the chosen people of God, and he is one of that people who *feels* his lost condition, and looks to Jesus for life and salvation full and free. Christ is God over all blessed for evermore: He has put on the human form—He was made under the law—He actively fulfilled it for his people in all its jots and tittles; that obedience of his freely and fully justifies the coming sinner; He was moreover answerable to the Father for all the sins of his people; He endured all that wrath which was due to them; in this manner He has saved them. He has quite put away their sins, for his blood covers them from the eye of holiness and justice, whilst his active obedience covers and adorns the persons of his favoured people. He has saved that people from sin, guilt, and bondage, and the wrath of God. In his name, and through his work, they have forgiveness, peace with God, solid comfort, grace, and even glory, all most freely bestowed!

Now this is the Saviour I want, a Saviour who does ALL FOR ME, and all IN me. This is the Saviour you need. Faith and repentance are required, but Jesus gives both. If I were to say to you, Repent, you would reply, "I would, but cannot." If I were to say, Believe, you would return the same answer. Were I to ask you, if you have produced, or can produce a single good work? you would still say, No! In the most affectionate manner I am capable of, I would advise you to look to yourself no longer, because it is displeasing and dishonouring to your Lord. You are poor, very, very poor. Go to the feet of Jesus then, just as you are now, own before Him your poverty and misery, and cry to Him for help—beg of Him to come and save you. If you are led in this manner to cry to Him, He will *surely come* and deliver you, for "shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and

night unto Him? Yea, I tell you, He will avenge them speedily."

You seem to want faith, hope, love, humility, patience, resignation, the spirit of prayer and praise—that is to say, you feel as if you were in want of everything. But let me tell you, Christ brings all these things with Him when He comes.

"Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity join'd with power:
He is able,
He is willing; doubt no more.

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requireth,
Is to feel your need of Him—
This He gives you,
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam."

Be not afraid of looking to Him, or of calling upon Him; you will not offend Him by knocking at his door—the harder and the more frequently you knock, the better it will please Him. I do believe He will, in his own time, enable you to set your seal to that word—"And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise Thee, though thou wast angry with me; but thine anger is turned away, and now thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation."

I need not tell you, that to hear you deliver such a testimony for God, would rejoice my heart. May you be favoured to believe, and live for ever. . . .

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

1835.

. . . . I BLESS God that I cannot erase from my heart, as some men seem to do, all impressions of my once much-loved and much-valued friends, and open my heart to the first new set of strangers that I may be thrown amongst.

Although I would by no means arrogate or appropriate to myself the fine character which our Lord gave Nathanael, - Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile," yet I can affirm, that had I been less sincere, or less ardent in my attachment to my friends, many a dart of agony would have missed my heart, which has gone DEEPLY into it!

. I was once asked if I thought a believer could die of a broken heart! I will tell you what I have thought lately, which is, that if anything could break my heart it would be this—Christ's final refusal of my soul! One word would do it—"Depart!"

What a mercy it is for us that we are clear of that fearful apostolical anathema! Peter was grieved because He said unto him the *third* time, "Lovest thou me!" and he said unto Him, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

I believe it to be nothing short of sovereign, all-conquering grace, that constrains a cold-hearted mortal like myself to love supremely the Friend of Sinners.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

To a Friend, on the Death of her Husband.

1835.

. I DESIRE to sympathise with you in your recent loss. To be left a widow and a mother at your age, has something very trying in it, that might well move the soul to pity. That—"CHRIST IS ALL"—betokens a happy frame of spirit.

"Christ is all." is the sacred source of true devotedness to God. So long as God keeps you there, you will be "a widow indeed; serving God day and night."

You have lost your pleasant gourd, but not your apple-tree; may you still sit under its sacred shadow, whilst its rich promises, like golden apples, fall into your lap. May you still delight yourself in the beauty, fragrance, excellence, and shadow of Christ.

Alas, how often have gay dreams, or the pleasures of hope, drawn me from this most endearing, ENCHANTING spot, and how often have I called myself a thousand FOOLS, for suffering my attention to be caught, and my soul to be carried away by false pleasures, and satanic illusions ! If there is any real, any solid blessedness to be enjoyed in this world, it is to be found ONLY WHERE MARY SAT.

O what a vile thing to be cheated and deprived of the SENSIBLE PRESENCE of the King of Saints—even for an hour—to lose oneself in this Satan's toyshop !

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

1835.

. . . . I AM at present in a very trying state, enjoying neither sweet fellowship with Christ, nor with the brethren ; I am like a sparrow alone on the housetop, and my heart within me is desolate ! My dear Jesus hides his face ; and although I do not question my INTEREST, still I feel that all the springs of life are down.

My bad heart seems full of wanderings, distrust in the sweet promise and providence of God, full of idolatries, corruptions, and enmity. I am world sick, sin sick, self sick, and man sick. May my trials purge my dross, and bring me to live more sensibly upon Christ.

How shamefully drossy must that heart be, which takes so many sharp and long trials to purge it ! I am persuaded that my afflictions are neither too long, too heavy, nor too sharp. I want more GRACE with them. I will not attempt to deny that we get little beside misery, by looking at our own ugly picture—SELF—our OLD NATURE is as frightful as Milton's " Death and Sin."

May the Lord the Spirit enable us to look to Jesus. In Him, we have consummate wisdom to direct us ; righteousness to cover all our vileness, and to adorn us for ever, and perfect holiness. He is our Husband—the loving and lovely Bridegroom of our souls, who will not leave us. When our wicked hearts seem as though they would strive

to sin away his loving-kindness, He still rests in his love and proves again and again, that many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it.

Many good Christians seem to take a pride in knowing very much of the badness of their hearts. May I be saved from this FALSE PRIDE. May it be my one great concern to know MORE of JESUS, and to love Him with a still growing affection.

I have never yet obtained pardon, peace, light, comfort or sanctity, by looking at myself; what I obtain is by looking unto, and living upon Jesus. To Him we have an everlasting union, and in Him we have an eternal standing. He has conquered all our foes, paid all our debts, and we are saved and called in Him, and by Him.

His hand shall feed, clothe, and shelter us. His arm shall defend us, and his fulness shall supply all our spiritual necessities. Without Christ I want everything; with Christ, NOTHING!

When his PRESENCE is sweetly enjoyed, I have light to enlighten me, life to enliven, consolations to comfort, and all-sufficient grace and strength to refresh and support me. When I am sensibly without Him, I find it best to wait for Him, and to pray for faith and patience.

My FAITH lies DORMANT until his Spirit works upon it; when his south wind blows softly, then I spread my little bit of canvas, and catch the favourable gale; the billows of adversity under me, and the sweet blowings of Christ's Spirit over me, waft my little bark nearer the peaceful harbour.

I am very glad to know that the dear Lord has so sweetly prepared your heart for the heavenly land. O, happy voyagers, who have passed all the storms of this tempestuous life, and who have moored fast with the chains of eternal love, upon the ocean of bliss! If we could do so without murmuring, I should be ready to join you and say, "Why is his chariot so long in coming?"

My soul sometimes glances at the heavenly country, as on Pisgah's top, stretches herself, plumes her wings, and longs to fly away. But a kind of "NEVERTHELESS," some-

what reluctantly calls her back : as Paul said, "Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." I am aware that my usefulness is on a very small scale, yet I wish to be all, do all, and suffer all, that my Father appoints. Brother Job admonishes me in saying, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait until my change come."

. . . . ED. BLACKSTOCK.

1835.

. . . It is well for us that salvation is of grace, and not of works, or I should certainly come limping behind, and at last find the door shut.

That has often been a sweet word to me, "The Master RECEIVETH publicans and SINNERS, and EATETH with them." What a mercy it is for us that the members of the church triumphant cannot be complete without us !

Christ has done great things for us ; the Holy Spirit has done great things for us ; and when we are in our right minds, we are anxious to prove our sense of obligation by our diligence. I have often, of late, felt the sweet force of that word, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work nor device in the grave, whither thou goest."

It is sweet working from life, the sweet spirit of gratitude presents a grateful feeling to the mind. When the Spirit sends the streams of a free grace salvation into my heart, and puts Christ upon me, then, "Up and be doing, for the glory of Christ !" is both suitable and sweet.

I am sorry that you continue so weak. May your long and heavy afflictions be sanctified, and, if it shall please God, may they be removed. What petition can be more consistent than this, "Father, thy will be done ?"

He that has brought you down is able to raise you up. He that has taken away your gourds, will lead you to the shadow of a great rock. He that has taken away your

earthly husband says, "Let thy widows trust in me." God knocks down our props from under us, as an act of pure friendship, that we may LEAN ONLY ON HIM.

. ED. BLACKSTOCK.

1835.

. I OFTEN think with gratitude of your kindness to me and mine, and I desire to do so whilst I live. In my poor prayers, I try to remember the friends of Christ at ——. The strings of real Christian friendship do not break through distance ; whenever it is well with me, I cannot but remember you.

I do not understand the putting away of old tried friends. I am sure that our gracious God is immutable, and I feel persuaded that the *nearer* a Christian lives to God, the less disposed will he be to *break* the bonds of *friendship*. I love the Lord's people for their Lord's sake.

I think sometimes I have been a great lover of holy pilgrims, and that I have received enough to *cool* the ardour of half a dozen men ! Indeed I know not how any man could deny that the gold is *now* become dim, and the most fine gold changed. Even the Nazarites of Zion are black as a coal ; the friends of Christ generally are living far below their privileges.

In many instances, instead of experience, there is head knowledge ; instead of faith, presumptuous confidence ; instead of love, flattering lips ; instead of communion with saints, mere canting and gossiping.

There is scarcely a greater disparity between silver and brass, than there is between the holy religion displayed in the Acts of the Apostles, and the poor *imitation* that is now extant. "O, tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph."

Oh ! that this breast of mine were more free from these awful signs of the times. I am too often faithless, stupid, cold, and dead. If the Lord were not more gracious to me

than I am faithful to Him, I do not know what would become of me.

Within these few weeks I have not been able to take delight in reading, meditation, conversation, or prayer; my *best* moments have been whilst preaching. The Lord has several times broken into my soul in such a manner that I could indeed say, to *live* is Christ, and to die, gain!

At such times I have had hard work to keep from wishing that I might be *immediately* dissolved to be with Christ, which I felt assured was far the best. I have latterly sung no hymn with so much soul delight, as I have that old favourite of mine, which was written by good old Mr. Berridge, 268th Hymn, Selection :—

“ If Jesus kindly say, and with a whispering word.”

In my best times it is generally so with me; *now*, I do not get mere sips and tastes, but am favoured to drink as if it really were at the *fountain-head*. Well, “ Let Him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine.” Half an hour with Jesus, makes up for a great deal of misery! I would rather hear Him say, “ Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon; look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions’ dens, and from the mountains of the leopards,”—than enjoy the best human society in the world without Him.

Methinks I hear Him this very morning whispering into my soul, “ Come away!”

“ He takes my soul ere I’m aware,
And shows me where his glories are;
No chariot of Amminadab
The heavenly rapture can describe.”

This is the Friend that loveth at all times. This is my Brother, born for adversity, whose sweetest friendship I seldom taste but *when in adversity*.

Let Jesus *smile*, and the world frown upon me, I am content. Even the world’s frown is a necessary evil; briers and thorns remind the spouse of Christ that she is

still in the wilderness; but at the moment I write I have a desire to lean on the bosom of Jesus.

“O let my name engraven stand
Both on thy heart and on thy hand;
Seal me upon thine arm, and wear
That pledge of love for ever there.”

For many years I have been led to pray for sweet communion with Jesus, and now at times I have it almost to my heart's content! A little more would almost fetch my soul like a bird out of the cage.

Blessed be the name of the Lord, I have no doubts or fears of my interest, yet I have at times fears of inward declensions, wanderings, and even of offending my most loving Father, for I have a *deceitful* heart.

“Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it.”

The friends here behave with kindness, for which I desire to be thankful. But I hardly dare live upon the streams; so many of my brooks have dried up, but the *fountain never*. To my dear friends at ———, in the most affectionate manner I am capable of, I send my kind and most christian remembrances, with this special message, “Live *near* to God.” You may think you want a thousand things, but as an old friend that *loves* your souls. I tell you *that* is the chief of what you want.

To a Christian it is the most weighty of all matters. With solid, and I trust lasting, esteem, I remain,

Your loving Brother in Christ,

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

1836.

. THROUGH God's mercy I have charity enough to believe that there are a goodly number whose love towards me will in due time *flourish again*, so that they will to their dying day esteem me as a servant of Jesus Christ, though in one or two respects a little like the Master, poor and despised.

I believe that a minister's love to his flock is stronger

than the love of the flock to a minister ; like the love of parents for their children, which is usually more steady than that of the children towards them. When my love is of the right kind, it looks for nothing again. All I wish for is the edification of the godly amongst you. The great and most adorable Three-One knows whom He has chosen, whom He has redeemed, and whom He has called, for "the Lord knoweth them that are his."

I would not wish to judge men according to the good or evil I have received from them, for he that judgeth both me and them is the Lord ; nor would I seek to make or cherish a party spirit amongst such as the Lord loveth as his own children ; there is a TIME OF MANIFESTATION both of good and bad figs.

Men are to be made manifest by their fruits,—grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles, need not be expected. I at this moment desire to love and pray for the Lord's people, and I ask this favour of those who love me, "Brethren, pray for us," for "we trust that we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly."

May the Lord bless and prosper and increase you more and more. I trust I shall not be left to forget the people when I am before my Father's throne.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

1836.

. THE principles of dissent are the principles of the Bible, but they are most shamefully abused in the present day. Scaffolding seems necessary to the erection of God's building. Tares must grow amongst the wheat until the time of the harvest. God's children are usually but children—simple souls! easily carried! about as steady as a weathercock! (especially when one "By-ends" gets amongst them.) Mr. Hart's word seems harsh, but it is too just: "Lord, direct us, we are fools." You may be surprised if I congratulate — on being cast out of office. I have no doubt it will ultimately make for the soul's peace and prosperity.

1. The first step in the process is to identify the problem or issue that needs to be addressed. This involves gathering information and understanding the context of the problem.

2. Once the problem is identified, the next step is to define the objectives and goals of the project. This helps to clarify what needs to be achieved and provides a clear direction for the team.

3. The third step is to develop a plan or strategy to address the problem. This involves breaking down the problem into smaller, manageable tasks and determining the resources needed to complete them.

4. The fourth step is to implement the plan. This involves putting the strategy into action and monitoring progress to ensure that the project is on track.

5. The final step is to evaluate the results of the project. This involves assessing the outcomes against the objectives and goals and identifying any areas for improvement.

[illegible]

— *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1997

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1. The first group of respondents (n = 10) was composed of students who were enrolled in the first semester of the undergraduate program in the Faculty of Education at the University of Lagos. They were selected through a purposive sampling technique to ensure that they had no prior knowledge of the research topic.

1. The first step in the process is to identify the problem or issue that needs to be addressed. This involves gathering information and understanding the context of the problem.

2. Once the problem is identified, the next step is to define the objectives and goals of the project. This helps to clarify what needs to be achieved and provides a clear direction for the team.

3. The third step is to develop a plan or strategy to address the problem. This involves breaking down the problem into smaller, manageable tasks and determining the resources needed to complete them.

4. The fourth step is to implement the plan. This involves putting the strategy into action and monitoring progress to ensure that the project is on track.

5. The final step is to evaluate the results of the project. This involves assessing the outcomes against the objectives and goals and identifying any areas for improvement.

living. "Return, we beseech Thee, O God of Hosts, look down from heaven, and behold and visit this vine, and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that Thou madest strong for thyself."

My heart is pained when I look at the bleeding wounds—the wrongs of Zion! My brother, may you and I be helped to pray that the Blessed Spirit would pour out his rich unction upon his ministers, his churches, and upon all his saints, thereby making them manifest from grievous wolves, and spots in our feasts of charity. O may the Lord's dear children yet "return to their own border, from the land of the enemy." "A voice was heard in Rama, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children, refused to be comforted, because they were not."

It is hardly too much to say, my heart bleeds when I think of ——. May the Lord increase in me the Spirit of prayer, in the behalf of his children in that place. I can truly say that such has been my love for the real children of God there, that I have often felt willing to spend and be spent, yea to die for them, if my death might have yielded them solid advantage. But I doubt, as to many, I must now say with Paul, "Though the more I love you, the less I be loved." Well, we shall meet again where we shall better understand each other, in that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed.

I desire now to say with Dr. Watts,

"I give my mortal interest up,
And make my God my all."

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

1837.

. MAY the Lord be pleased once more to direct my way among you, and may the people be made to say, "Is not the sound of his Master's feet behind him?" that my cry may be, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

It is my desire that, as the friend of the Bridegroom, I may be favoured to hear the glorious Bridegroom's voice,

and be helped to say, This my joy is fulfilled. Much as I esteem and love you all, I would rather stay at home and mourn in a corner, than come without Him. Without the PRESENCE and POWER of my Master, I shall make but a sorry appearance before you all, and only be a makesport for the Philistines. I am ready to say, Dear Lord, not a step further WITHOUT THEE. "I can do nothing without Thee; make haste, my God, make haste." I do not ask for strong consolations; God knows best, when and how to comfort me, and with Him I desire to leave my case, but his gracious presence I hope I shall not go without. "Except thy presence go up with me, carry me not up hence."

Paul's preaching was powerful and blessed preaching when the Lord stood by him, and strengthened him; and when I enjoy a little of the same power, Gospel foes are no more to me than a windle straw.

Without Jesus, I seem as lean as Pharaoh's lean kine, and as dry as an old fig! with Him, I can "run through a troop, or leap over a wall."

"But if my Lord be once withdrawn,
And I attempt to work alone;
When new temptations spring and rise,
I find how great my weakness is."

Unbelief, pride, and self seem to be my worst foes. When my faith is under trials—whether in providence, in my own soul's affairs, or in relation to the ministry, then, vile unbelief prevails. I grieve, I fear, I faint, I doubt, and feel the load of sin; but when the clouds break, and a mercy drop or two falls into my heart, I begin to sing,

"Begone, unbelief, my Saviour is near, &c."

Jesus comes and sweetly manifests Himself unto me, and I find my heaven in the most kind and sweet embraces of the blessed Bridegroom. My friend, communion with Jesus is my heaven of heavens. I stand at the tent door and charge the daughters of Jerusalem, not to stir nor awake my *only love* until He pleases.

But ere long, my heart is lifted up with pride, and my

vagrant soul goes a gadding and gossiping. Jesus catches me amongst the gossips, and is under the necessity of stripping me naked, and of taking away my ornaments. Hosea ii. Then I begin to think my soul looks as ugly as the witch of Endor. I compare myself to the Arabian in the wilderness, or to veiled Thamar sitting by the way-side.

At length grace prevails again, and I break out and say,

“Why should thy bride appear like one
That turns aside to paths unknown?
My constant feet would never rove,
Would never seek another love.”

But after all, self sticks close to me, and deals in high thoughts, high notions, lofty imaginations, and fond conceits; nay, in all manner of infernal working. In Christ's absence, self usurps the throne of my affections, puts on the triple crown, and rules with a strong hand. Self is as wayward as a wild ass, and as obstinate as a homebred one.

I think nothing sticks so close as self. But let Jesus be exalted, and trample the monster under his blessed feet. I shall never be satisfied until I awake in the likeness of Jesus, when I hope to appear with all the glorified throng for ever delivered from unbelief, pride, self-will, the world, and the devil; when there shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of the Lord for ever.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

September, 1837.

. . . . I WILL show you how I love the doctrines. I solemnly believe in effectual vocation, and I want to enjoy a fresh testimony in my soul that I am called of God. I believe in particular redemption; and I want a fresh application of the blood of Christ, by the Spirit, upon my conscience, that I may with fresh savour upon my spirit sing,

“Redeem'd, with Jesus' blood redeem'd.”

I believe in the glorious doctrine of imputed righteousness; and I want that heavenly robe put upon me once

more. I believe that I am a son of God ; but I want the Holy Spirit to bear witness with my spirit that I am a child of God. I believe that full and free pardon flows to the chief of sinners through the blood of Christ ; but I want pardon sealed once more upon my conscience.

I believe God is at peace with me ; but I want the sweet ENJOYMENT of that peace as my conscience keeper. I believe the doctrine of God's election ; and I want to know once more, from God's own mouth, that He has chosen me. I believe in predestination ; but I want to FEEL it. I believe in the sovereignty of God ; and I want to be passive in his hand, and know no will but his.

I believe in the doctrine of the eternal union of Christ and his Church ; and I want to feel that Christ and my soul are one. I believe in the new covenant of peace ; and I want to feel that blessed covenant let down into my soul by the power of God. I believe that God is my Father, and I want to feel that He is so. I believe that Christ is my Redeemer ; but I want to enjoy his sweet PRESENCE. I believe that the Holy Ghost is a most precious Comforter, and I want Him to come and comfort me with his sweet COMMUNION.

I believe in the reign of Grace ; and I want feelingly to prove grace abounding to me, the chief of sinners. I hope in the mercy of God ; and I want that mercy to break down my heart, and come and kiss a weeping child. I believe that God loves me with an everlasting love ; and I want just another taste of that sweet wine of the kingdom ; I want to be feelingly and sweetly settled in the wisdom, power, and faithfulness of God. I want to be sweetly established in the doctrine of God's most holy providence.

I want to be sanctified by and through the truth. I want to have the world overcome, Satan vanquished, indwelling sin subdued, unbelief crippled. I want to have pride and self trampled under the feet of Christ. I want Jesus to come into the garden of my soul, and by his Spirit raise in me his own fruit, and take the honour of it to Himself. I want sweetly to lose myself in the arms and

on the bosom of Christ. I want to be, do, and suffer all the will of Jesus, without murmuring or repining. I want to love his word, his worship, his ordinances, precepts, and his saints.

I want to glory in infirmities, that the power of Christ alone may rest upon me. Here are some of my many wants.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

December, 1887.

. THROUGH divine favour, I am no party man. I think few men living have more sincerely, or more deeply bewailed the factious dividing spirit that has too long prevailed amongst the children of God, and which has too often opened the mouths of scoffing infidels, and, alas ! wounded and grieved many tender consciences.

These awful rents have made God's church a bleeding vine. Too often has the news of another split, split my ears and disturbed my peace. I could not possibly rejoice in these things, unless I could take pleasure in seeing the daughter of Zion walk naked before her enemies.

Amongst real brethren, every new division furnishes a feast for the enemy of souls ; and the enemies of the church lead down in the dance with pipe and tabret, because this is a sure way to cool the spiritual affections of the saints, if not to leaven their children with infidelity.

And in my opinion, whilst so much lordship, bigotry, and self-seeking exist amongst the Lord's ministers and people, we shall go on dividing and subdividing, until the scourge of persecution shall come out against God's saints in this land, to teach them better.

It is sanctified persecution or opposition that has brought me into the mind in which I now am ; and I cannot help thinking that, however much persecution for the Gospel's sake is to be dreaded, it is almost the only thing likely to open men's eyes to those evils I have just named.

My dear friend, I do not pretend to be cured of these evils, but my eyes are once for all opened to SEE them, and my heart is opened to BEWAIL them. (Jer. ix. 1, 2.)

MANIFESTED.

...turn the a
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...s-bane, a
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...all the ba
...I am now a
...of the Pet
...efficacy
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...days in
...now and the
...FRESHNESS
...GREAT TRIALS
...this world
...the better
...sick, and
...forgiven

My trials are many, but God is still
...But alas! let
...Yet still He
...He is MY God
...ED. BLACKSTON

February, 188
I HAVE NOT of late been left to give over p
ing, but have had many wanderings of heart and at
tion, and do reap the bitter fruits thereof in darkn
deadness, and want of sweet communion with Jesus. I
like Peter, following my Lord afar off. Public oppo
tunities have of late yielded me less comfort than th
have done for some years. I find that the heart is
unbelieving, as base, and as deceitful as ever.
Through the mercy of God. I do not doubt my inter
Christ, but I am so lukewarm and lifeless, that

at these things. Still, I believe that He who has begun the good work will carry it on ; for grace begun by the Spirit, and grace must finish it. I can do nothing, were I to save my soul ! Exhortations to believe, to turn to God, or pray to Him, would be entirely unavailing upon me.

I am like the man at the pool of Bethesda—as weak and worthless as he, waiting for the moving of the Ruler.

Perhaps this is sent to me, that I may SYMPATHISE deeply with the Lord's impotent folk, the blind, halt, lame, withered, &c., who, like myself, are waiting till the Angel troubles the waters.

Consider that the experience in which I am at this time (if experience it may be called) is just where the worst part of the church of God is now lying. I read of a man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho ; and, he declined from the privileges of a free-born son of Zion, to a cold, carnal, worldly spirit. He got into the suburbs of smoky Jericho, and fell among thieves, as the devil, the world, indwelling sin, and unbelief. Little thieves inside being the worst, whistled, opened the door, and let the big thieves in, who, when they were all together, made sad havoc, for they stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and left him half dead ; they did not deprive him of his interest in Christ, but they took off him the garments of salvation, made him naked, wounded him—that is, the enemy stabbed him with the word, “Where is now thy God ?” leaving him half dead with fears and frights.

It chanced that way, one who was something like one of our blind high-churchmen, with black gown, cassock, and bands ; but he determined to get out of the scent of the poor wounded man, and went to the other side, and walked off as stiff as a poker.

Next comes up a Levite, one of the mongrel breed, a man with a bit of modern divinity, cousin german to the son of the bondwoman ; he came and looked ; at first he seemed inclined to pity the poor man, but finding by his groans, something which he thought savoured

young Christians. The following are some of the reasons why they are so prone to doubt this matter:—

First. Because they discover *grace* to be so very *great*, they can hardly believe it is for *them*.

Secondly. Because they see and feel themselves to be “*so unworthy*.” Now, if it were bestowed upon our worthiness, it would not be GRACE. Grace is bestowed upon the ungodly.

Thirdly. They cannot see any grace in them. The eye which sees all other things cannot see itself. A gracious heart sees everything but its own graciousness; therefore, if you can see no wisdom, goodness, or strength, in yourself, nothing but folly, sin, weakness, unbelief, &c., it is because grace is already implanted in your breast, and God has OPENED the eyes of your soul.

Fourthly. But you feel so blind, stupid, dark, cold, and dead, that you think you cannot possess the true grace of God. Yet you see, feel, and mourn over these things. Now, I ask, can mere human nature do this?

You **FEEL** these things—then you must have **LIFE** in you; for there can be no feeling where there is no life! Think on this.

Fifthly. But you have not those exalted views of God the Father, of Christ, and of the blessed Spirit, which you would like to have; I answer—you love, fear, and reverence them. It is the complaint of every true Christian. Moses says, “I beseech thee shew me thy glory,” as if he had never seen anything of it! whereas he had already tasted so much as made him long for more; and so it is with you.

Sixthly. But you do not see the sinfulness of sin, nor hate it as you would. I answer—this complaint shows that you *do* hate it, otherwise it would be a sweet morsel, for sin is sweeter than honey to a natural man. See how the swine will roll itself in mud on a hot summer’s day. So the carnal mind would roll itself in filth, if it were not for the fear of punishment. It is good when we hate sin because it defiles the conscience. A cleanly child dreads falling into the mud pit.

Seventhly. But you, perhaps, complain that you often confess sin to God, forsake it, and then return to it again! This arises from weakness or infirmity; if weakness, remember grace is GRACE, however weak. If this unpleasant return to sin proceeds from infirmity, remember our glorious High Priest is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He can have compassion on the ignorant, and them who are out of the way. Our backslidings are from ourselves, our returnings are of the Lord of Hosts.

Returning to sin is the bitter complaint of every sincere soul upon earth. At times we loath it, because it offends our Father, defiles our conscience, disturbs our peace, weakens our faith, darkens our evidences, hinders our souls, interrupts our intercourse with heaven, stops our mouth in prayer, and dishonours God. But show me a Christian who was never guilty of it, and I will put on my spectacles to look at him, and acknowledge that he is a nonsuch! If a real Christian could avoid this returning to sin (I speak especially of heart sins), he would soon be perfect, free from sin, and would have no need of a Mediator, or of the blood of Christ! Jesus and his blood are not wanted, where a man is perfect; but both are highly prized by a sensible sinner. I would rather keep company with a weeping Mary than with a perfect Simon!

Eighthly. But, perhaps, you will say I have no spirit of prayer—I answer, how do you know? When the poor publican smote upon his breast, and cried “God be merciful to me a sinner,” I dare say, had you been by him, you would have had hard work to persuade him that he was a mighty man in prayer, and that he had thereby actually forced open the very gates of heaven! Yet so it turned out, for he went down to his house with his justification sealed in his own conscience.

Now, to prove that you are a stranger to true prayer, you must show that you never once uttered that solemn soul-cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” I believe you have put this up scores of times. And if it be so, though you should at present feel too much indifference, yet, still you are encouraged to ask your heavenly

rather to give you his Holy Spirit, and are positively assured that He will neither give you a STONE nor a SERPENT.

Ninthly. You will say, "I fear you have too good an opinion of me and of my case, or you would speak in very different language." I answer, this suggestion shows me that you have discovered your heart by nature to be deceitful. "Yes," you reply, "I know it is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Why, then, your evil heart is the greatest plague you have !

Let me remind you that a knowledge of the plague of the heart is a sure sign of grace bestowed and implanted. Indwelling sin is our disease ; a sight thereof is the knowledge of our disease. Only one thing more thou lackest. What is that ? The great Physician, with his balm of Gilead ! Aye, say you, that is indeed what I most stand in need of, what I sometimes ask for, yet often fear I shall never possess.

You are sin-sick. Did you ever hear of a sin-sick soul being turned away from his door without a cure ? No, certainly not ! but you are afraid He will have nothing to do with you. So was I once ; yet He proved better to me than all my fears. And I am much mistaken if you do not find it so one day.

Did Jehovah Jesus take upon Him human nature, and bear the sins and carry the sorrows of his Church ? did He offer his back to be plowed upon with the plowers ? did He expose his blessed face to shame and spitting, suffer his precious head and temples to be pierced with a thorny crown ? did He fulfil the law in his own person ? did He stand the butt of all the temptations and all the malice of the legions of hell ? did He endure the hidings of his Father's face, and drink up the cup of penal wrath, and die the amazing death of the cross, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring them to God, merely that He might give an opportunity of refusing your PRAYERS, and of shutting the GATES of MERCY upon you ? Far be the thought from you ! Oh, do not trifle with his love, his wounds, his agony, and bloody sweat. "Let not your heart be troubled ; ye believe in God, BELIEVE ALSO IN ME."

of my dear Elizabeth to her dear brother Henry—" May I meet you in heaven !"

I need not say *that* is the fervent language of my heart concerning them. My deceased children appear to me to be good company ; they wean me from this fading world, and I long for another and a better state of existence. Though dead they yet live, and yet speak to me! They often chide, and sometimes counsel me. I sincerely wish never to forget them.

There shall always be in my mind, and in my affections, a place sacred to their memory. I view them as being my instructors and my monitors. I will not ask you if these thoughts accord with yours—we are both wounded in the same place. Let those censure us who have never felt as we do. On this subject I often try to think as a Christian, whilst I feel as a man.

Well, after all, we do not wish them back, but we wish to be with them.

"Happy songsters ! when shall I your chorus join ?"

I often think of those Christian friends with whom I have taken sweet counsel, having walked with them to the house of God. In this sense I am almost a broken merchant—I have had many and great losses. In Christian friendship I am become a poor man ; many of my best companions have left me, to join "the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven." They are better employed than in converse with me—a poor distrustful, dissatisfied, grumbling mortal. I think of them, and they appear to me like angels now! How happy the spirits of the just ! How superior their society ! "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. Yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." May we ultimately rest among them ! But I must now draw the curtain.

You will say—"If I had as good a hope as you have, I think I should hardly grumble as you do, but say with Job, 'All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come.'" So I have said, and so I would say

again, but full often guilt and fear drag me down far below my blessed privileges. I am only one of little faith. I am often in bondage—a helpless captive sold under sin—an alien from my mother's children—a captive exile—a child of liberty in chains and fetters. I groan, being burdened. I have found those words of Erskine true—

“Before He'll suffer pride that swells,
He'll drag thee through the mire
Of sins, temptations, little hells;—
Thy Husband saves by fire.”

But you will say, “You are not without hope.” No, blessed be the God of hope, I do not know what I should do were that the case. To tell you the truth, I nursed that brat unbelief, until I durst nurse it no longer. I would fain leave Satan to NURSE his OWN children himself, or let them pine away and die. I think he is the father of a true believer's fears.

You will tell me, you know you are a sinner, whilst afraid you have never been rightly convinced of sin. You think you are not truly humbled, that you do not rightly repent, that your heart is as hard as the flinty rock, and your soul, if it feels anything, feels nothing but death; that you have desired Christ, yet fear you shall not obtain Him, because (as you think) your desires are not right.

Perhaps you will say, “All these things are true: this is in part my case.” But let me tell you, I believe many are now in glory who had these fears when in the wilderness; they “were all their lifetime subject to bondage,” yet Christ died to deliver them. Hebrews ii. 14, 15. Yes, you will say, but that is not the worst of my case; for I sometimes think it would have seemed better if God had chosen all men to life eternal, or if He had never suffered man to fall, or if He had never created man at all. But now I hope you look upon these thoughts as blasphemous.

Again, have you not sometimes thought that grace is not so full and free as ministers in their zeal represent? Have you not sometimes doubted whether Christ is as

compassionate to sinners as our ministers represent Him to be? Do you not sometimes entertain hard thoughts of Christ, because He does not graciously reveal Himself to you? Do you not feel out of temper with yourself, the Bible, and the Almighty, because you feel so hard, so unhappy, so miserable? Are you not ready to wish you had been a dog, a stone, or anything that had no soul?

Remember that unbelief, like a spider, can suck poison from the sweetest flowers. Christ never shows so much grief at any sin as the sin of UNBELIEF. "And He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." Never does He show such dislike to unbelief in any, as in his own children. As Cæsar, when he fell, said to one, "And you too, Brutus?" so Christ may say to you and me—"And you too?" Lord, save us from this deadening, soul-damning sin!

Lord, save us from hard thoughts of Thee! Christ is the sensible sinner's best and only Friend. When we harbour hard thoughts of Him, it is to trifle with his sufferings, his wounds, his groans, his cries, his blood, his death, his intercession, his promises, his invitations, his Spirit, since He hath savingly wrought in us.

O for a true, strong, living faith, that we might glorify God, and enjoy Him for ever. "He is able, He is willing." doubt no more."

"Lord, we fain would trust Thee solely,
 'Twas for us Thy blood was spilt.
 Bruised Bridegroom! take us wholly,
 Take and make us what Thou wilt."

May the Lord work in you and me all the pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with mighty power! Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

1840.

. . . . I can sympathise with you in your trials, having myself experienced many such in this wilderness, and to me these have made it a valley of Baca, or a vale of tears.

I would be thankful that any lines of mine should have been made useful to you; and could be more thankful still, might I be enabled to write anything at this time for your edification and comfort. You wish me to give you a few thoughts on Ps. xxxvii. 3,—“Trust in the Lord,” &c. You well understand the meaning of these words, as they apply to temporal things, therefore I shall confine my remarks to what I believe to be their spiritual intention.

“Trust in the Lord.” God says, I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by the arms. God has quickened your soul by his Spirit, convinced you of sin, and led you to the fountain of Christ’s blood for pardon and peace; He has bestowed both upon you. You have experienced the drawings of the Father. Sensible comforts, as leading strings, have drawn you to Christ, that you might trust and rejoice in his dear name.

You have found it very easy to trust in the Lord, when drawn and supported by sensible comforts: in this way the Lord first taught you to go. When we are sensibly strengthened, and the promise is unto us a cluster of the rich grapes of Eschol, it is very sweet, and *mighty* EASY to trust in the Lord; and now you have to learn what it is by a NAKED FAITH to trust in a naked promise.

“Be strong,”—in the absence of sense, sight, and comfort,—

“When hope decays, and God delays,
And seems to quite forsake us.”

To trust in Him is the hardest work faith has to do; especially when all God’s dealings, and all his providences seem to cross his promises. To believe in hope against hope, when nature fails, and sight, and sense, and means, are no more; even then, true faith (after a fainting fit or two) will sometimes in her Creator’s strength get up, close her eyes and senses to whys, whens, hows, and wherefores, men, means, and instruments, and against all hope, steadfastly believe in hope.

When a divine faith gets up, she bolts the door upon the scoffing crew, laughs at impossibilities, and says, “It *shall* be *done*!” As old Sarah laughed behind the tent door,

so all her daughters shall laugh with her. Then, to trust in the Lord is holily to adventure upon Him, and rest in Him, even when unbelief would vilify the God of truth, and that atheistical scoffer, Carnal Reason, would call us fools or fanatics for such a wild-goose adventure.

This is your present lesson and mine, in Christ's college: the Lord strengthen and qualify us for it! That word still sounds in our ears, "Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward; for ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry; for the just shall live by his faith."

"To trust his gracious promise,
When sore beset with evil,
This, this is faith will conquer death,
And overcome the devil."

"Trust in the Lord," &c. But to show the world and ourselves, that although our faith is but little, it is not a *dead* faith, the Holy Ghost exhorts us to "do good,"—namely, to obey our Lord's precepts, and walk as obedient children, carefully to OBSERVE the RULES of the house, and honour our Master in them. Grace does all for us, and works all in us. "So shalt thou dwell in the land." God in Christ is our portion, our inheritance, our land. He inherits us, and we inherit Him. The Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance. Eph. i.

If God be our dwelling-place, our habitation, and our inheritance, He must be our land. Canaan's land was a type of Gospel rest and of Gospel privileges; therefore these are, in a time state, OUR LAND. So shalt thou dwell in the land—that is, trust in the Lord and do good—so shalt thou enjoy the highest and best privileges of the saints on earth; now and then sliding for a few moments into promised rest by faith, and sitting with Christ and with saints and angels in heavenly places.

"And verily, verily thou shalt be fed."—Christ, his presence, and his doctrine, and his promises, are the bread of life; He is the fatted calf, tender and good, for pre-

digals dressed. His Spirit is living water. Comfort is honey out of the rock. His unction is the marrow of divinity, which He gives to his children, whilst dogs that are without gnaw the bones. Trying providences, and hard texts of Scripture, are Gospel nuts. The Father's love and Christ's blood, well mingled, are the wine of the blessed, and these are well refined and free from dregs. God's table is the board of plenty, and the board of health too, and there you may eat, and so may I.

But whilst here, we must have fast days as well as feast days: "A little while and ye shall not see me,"—that makes us sad; "A little while, and ye shall see me,"—this makes us glad. In the time of famine you shall be satisfied; for lest we should miss a meal, God has undertaken to feed us Himself. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd." The times of refreshing come from his presence; and though unsent shepherds blow upon their scrannel pipe, and the lean and hungry sheep look up but are not fed, Christ will not serve you so. No, He will lead you in green pastures, in a good land and large, and by the sweet waters of quietness, where you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. Upon the high mountains of Israel shall their folds be—"Verily thou shalt be fed."

Here is the solemn affirmation of a Triune Jehovah—Then you shall "eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions to them to whom nothing is (ministerially) prepared." You shall find it so. Therefore, the Lord help you to trust in his dear name!

I have found it good to write to you—may a divine unction fall upon your spirit, and you shall find it good to read these scraps, as an earnest of a full soul-feast! Remember, my dear sister, that Jesus Christ is our daily manna; his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. Here you may eat and drink, and forget your poverty, which may the Lord grant for his own name and mercy's sake. Amen and Amen!

I wish I could, as you exhort me, give my fears to the winds. I have a great PRESENTIMENT that I am going into a great fight of affliction, for "in every city bonds and

afflictions abide me," and it is only now and then I can **FEELINGLY** say, "None of these things move me." Still I have a hope, that however deeply plunged in tribulation, and although all men should forsake me, the Lord will not; but that, in due time, the good Lord will deliver me from all my foes, and all my fears, and that I shall sing his praises on the bright hills of everlasting day, and live to see that I have not had one trouble too **MANY**, or too **HEAVY**. O to be favoured to hold the conqueror's palm, and sing the conqueror's song!

As the Lord enables you, pray for a poor tried one. You see how large a letter I have written to you with mine own hand. May the Lord make it the means of refreshing your soul, and secure the glory to Himself! and when it is well with you, remember me.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

Leicester, 1841.

. . . . I READ your letter with pleasure, and the more so as I had scarcely expected to hear again from your village. See what a deal of mischief the devil can do in a short time! He is the whisperer that separateth chief friends! "Behold," says the Apostle James, "how great a matter a little fire kindleth!"

Well, I feel persuaded after all, that a *spiritual union shall never be broken*, nor shall true brotherly love ever cease. It may be damped, but it cannot die. Much cause we have to blush and be ashamed that it runs so low; but those living springs that have so often supplied us with it can never fail,—they will flow again. Washed in the blood of Jesus, clothed with his righteousness, and adorned by his Spirit, we shall meet again,

"Where congregations ne'er break up,
And Sabbaths never end."

There we shall love one another purely and unceasingly. O that the blessed Spirit of unction might soon shed his

holy influences into our hearts, and cause our love to flourish again.

Zion is at present in a torpid state. A long and chilling frost has benumbed every spiritual faculty, and laid Zion's men out as dead men. But there is a promise in her behalf, which the Lord will fulfil,—“Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth her dead. . . . ”

On a Saturday, I sometimes think I shall have to give up preaching; the Bible seems a sealed book, and my soul is as dry as the barren heath. But when the time comes, the Lord helps me, and often sheds such a heavenly savour on my spirit whilst preaching, as affords me solid comfort. But, alas! I have black Mondays, and I almost wonder what I was talking about the day before! I am in a very trying place just now, and know not what to do; but I desire to lie in God's hand, and be at his disposal.

The new place is opened, and I sometimes think it will be the cause of my removal, and that I shall have to turn out once more with my little family. Several rich persons who did assemble with us, are gone from us to the new place. Sea and land have been compassed against me, but I am ready to halt or to march as the Lord may see good. I only want to know His will, and do it. I hope the Lord is with me to help me. But as the following words have been much on my mind, I am wondering what God is about to do with me. Matt. x. 22, 23. Our people have called me to be their pastor, but I have not seen my way clear; so I am waiting to see “what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.” They have made a considerable inroad amongst Mr. C——'s people as well as ours, and will, I think, ultimately prove a source of great uneasiness to him. I go to hear him often on a Wednesday evening.

Since I came here, I have been upon the whole somewhat raised and strengthened in body and mind, and am not without hope that God will yet make all things work

together for good. We have seen many brooks and streams dried up, but the Lord has been our stay. Blessings on Him ! He is my best and only Friend, the only one that never, never forsakes. He keeps me feeling after Him, and sometimes seems as if He were not FAR from me. My hope and trust are in his name. He will never fail me, nor forsake me—bad though I am. I often think of your dear father and mother ; tell them from me, that my love to them is still the same. I am glad of the recovery of your wife ; tell her I hope the Lord will reconcile her to the death of her child.

Under the law the first-born was his : He has taken no more than He had a right to. He saw it to be best, and took but what He gave. How many have wished, in vain, that they had been as an infant that had never seen the light ! “ For us they sicken, and for us they die.” . . .

EDWARD BLACKSTOCK.

1841.

. . . . I FEEL very sorry for the dark and trying state of mind of which you complain in both your last letters, and wonder at it, because it used to be so different. Surely we have taken sweet counsel together, and have walked to the house of God in company. I grant it is indeed an awful thing (as you say) to be deceived in soul matters ; and if you were trusting to free will, and free agency, to human merit, or sound Gospel notions in the head—being a stranger to heart-work, and the LIFE and POWER of true godliness,—I should see it necessary to change my voice, as Paul says.

But have I not seen you walking in the light of God's countenance ? Has not Jesus revealed Himself unto you many a time ? and has He not often in seasons of trouble delivered you ? Has He not applied many a promise with divine power to your heart ? Has He not granted you many a time of sweet and holy enlargement in prayer ? Has He not impressed your heart in private with such and such truths, and then brought you into his house, and con-

firmed these things from the mouth of his servants? Has He not manifested his love to your soul, so that you thought you never could doubt his goodness any more, or call in question your soul's interest in Him? Did he ever fail you, or forsake you? I trow not! Then, stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved!

O, remember, He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever! Whatever clouds may veil his face, or darken your sky, He rests in his love. "Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by his faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them who believe to the saving of the soul. See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh."

O, my dear friend, UNBELIEF is the cruel spear that pierces HIM! You and I do not wish to cause his wounds to bleed afresh. No, no! let us catch Him by the feet, and say, "My Lord, my God!"

You are undergoing a long captive state; by and by He will turn your captivity, and then you will be like them that dream! Then your mouth shall be filled with laughter, and your tongue with singing, and you shall say, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad!" Now, you are in the dark; anon you shall say, "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." He bringeth deep things out of darkness, and light out of the shadow of death. Now, the good man is gone a long journey, and he hath taken his bag of money with him, but he will come home at the time appointed. Now you are tempted, but thy God will make the tempter flee; now you see nothing, and feel nothing, but a body of sin and death, but this is only the strife raised by the law in the members against the law of the mind.

Here is the trial of faith, and the patience of the saints; trust in, and plead the blood of Jesus. "And they overcame Him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the

death." Now, though you are locked up in unbelief, coldness, deadness, &c., your life is still in the root, and shall ere long ascend into the branch : "Because I live, ye shall live also." Blessed be God, our unbelief cannot make the faith of God without effect. "God hath not cast away his people which He foreknew. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, principalities nor powers, things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Sometimes God gives Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers. Little-faith fell among thieves, but the good Samaritan came in with his oil and wine, &c. &c. When the priest and the Levite have passed by, look out for HIM. "He will surely turn, and smile again, nor shalt thou seek his face in vain."

Dear daughter in the faith, fare you well ; the Lord lift up the light of his countenance, and give you peace. So desires and prays,

Your sincere, obliged, and ever-faithful Friend,

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

1842.

. . . . I FIND you are still in the furnace of affliction, and that you are still helped to glorify the name of the Lord in the fires. In themselves afflictions are not joyous, but grievous, yet for the Lord to be WITH YOU in them is a mercy unspeakable, known only to a highly favoured few. For our afflictions, taken at the longest, are but short, and taken at the heaviest, are but light, when placed in the balance with an eternal weight of glory. Though the way is rough, heaven the believer's home will be sweet.

"Are we not tending upward too,
As fast as time can move?
Nor should we wish the hours more slow
That keeps us from our love."

You ask me if the promises I alluded to in my last, referred to myself personally, or to my ministry. I answer,

to both, but especially to the latter. And although I received them many years ago with great confidence, yet I cannot tell you how that confidence has risen or fallen according to circumstances. But I hope the Lord will bring me to his feet, lay me low, and keep me there.

You remark, that all the promises you have seem to stand connected with TRIBULATION ; so have all the promises I ever had ! Tribulation, since my pardon was first sealed, has always been my lot. I am one of those dull, unready fools, that can learn only in the school of adversity. "Fools, because of their transgressions, are afflicted." Surely He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.

The Lord alone is the single portion of his people ; and whenever my wandering heart gets away from Him, He always hides his face, and hedges up my way with thorns, as if He should say, "I will either have you wholly, or not at all." "Thou shalt be for me, and not for another man."

It is not likely that Jesus should put up with the world's leavings. And yet, bless his holy name ! He does. I have hard work at times to keep from thinking, that Jesus has not another heart half so base and so treacherous as mine to deal with.

The two first Sabbaths of this journey I felt pretty well, and liked my companions ; but since I have been at —, I have been like one that had lost his way, or who has got into the congregation of the dead. They do not seem to understand me, nor I them. I have found a few out of many who fear the Lord, but they seem young in the ways. But we read that, in old time, travellers went through bye paths. Alas ! I find but few companions—but few to die and live with.

"Wisdom shows a narrower path,
With here and there a traveller."

O Lord, bring and keep us near thy bleeding, dying breast !

Excuse this incoherent letter.

. . . . E. BLACKSTOCK.

1842

. . . . I RECEIVED your kind letter, and thank you for all your good wishes, and for the information you give respecting the good woman whom the Lord was pleased to bless at March.

The Lord's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts ; and sometimes when death works in the preacher, life works in the people, and God thereby secures to Himself the glory due unto his name. I desire to be thankful for every measure of usefulness ; to his name be the praise !

Should you come over next month, need I say that we shall be very glad to see you ? My wife still retains her bad cough, the rest are all tolerably well, and we are hobbling on as usual,—sometimes much cast down, and sometimes hoping, and trusting, and cleaving to Him, who alone can help the helpless and the faint.

As Mr. G. is coming to supply the four last Sabbaths in May, I am at present for that time without an engagement, and have in that an errand to a throne of grace ; and here is room for faith, prayer, and patience, if the Lord shall be pleased to bestow them upon me. All depends upon Him who bears up the pillars of the universe, and manages all events, and all our concerns.

I hope the dear Lord is still maintaining his work and his fear in your heart, and that He will not suffer you to be overborne by the cares of this vain life. Riches bring no comfort in a dying hour, and the *keen* pursuit of them (to the neglecting of the soul) is the climax of folly ! It is so difficult to observe the golden mean, neither to be negligent in business, nor unmindful of the never-dying soul's everlasting interests.

Without distinguishing grace, it is impossible for a young man to seek FIRST the kingdom of God and his righteousness. I feel it so, as an old man. We can do nothing ; and yet thrice happy is that soul, who is favoured daily to wait and knock at the gate of wisdom, at the door of mercy !

. . . . ED. BLACKSTOCK.

1842.

. . . . I WAS sorry to find that you were in a state of mind so dark and trying, and can well sympathize with you in it. I do think I have gone through as much of darkness and deadness as any one has in my time. I have often been with Heman, "Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom Thou rememberest no more : and they are cut off from Thy hand. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and Thou hast afflicted me with all Thy waves. Selah." Psalm lxxxviii. 5—7.

But, my dear friend, is not this a partial fulfilment of what we have often prayed for, viz. that we might be favoured to view the SUFFERINGS of Christ? It is true we did not mean this! We wanted to be led direct to Gethsemane, and from thence to Calvary, but in some cases that is not God's way. All penal suffering due to Zion has been endured by the dear Lord Jesus. He drank hell dry for his people!

But there is yet a PORTION of sufferings to be endured by his church, and we must bitterly pass through this, that we may now and then have a sweet glance at his sufferings, and so have fellowship with Him in them. Idols and indwelling sin have often, alas! defiled my conscience; then the law has set in, and the devil has brought up the rear with his temptations; and, what has been worse than all, my Father has visited me with rods and frowns, and when I have tried to pray, I have felt quite unable, and have seemed stricken through with death.

"Before He'll suffer pride that swells,
He'll drag thee through the mire
Of sins, temptations, little hells;
Thy Husband saves by fire!"

This loving Husband will by and by raise you up from your grave, and embrace your soul in the arms of his love. You shall hear him say, "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon," &c. "We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God, and this

life is given us for a prey, and in other respects we are not to seek great things to ourselves here."

"For every pleasure has its sting,
And every sweet a snare."

So I find it. "For thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more." He who has done the former, will perform the latter. In dead and languishing frames, exhortations are of little use. When we can neither read nor pray, fight nor fly, we can only sit in silence, because He has borne it upon us.

Now, you will see that you have been highly favoured, and will learn to long for one of the days of the Son of Man. "The captive exile hasteth that he may be loosed," &c. "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name." The righteous shall compass me about, when Thou shalt deal bountifully with me. We are in desolate places as dead men, we roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves, &c.

There is nothing better, in such a case, than to be helped to fall at his feet in submission, take the punishment of our iniquity, and to sigh and groan it out before the Lord, who looseth the prisoners. He will turn again, He will subdue our iniquities, and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. May the Lord soon sweetly shine upon you, and confirm all that He has wrought in your soul !

For myself at present, I am not overladen with comforts ; the streams run low. But by stirring afflictions, He keeps me from slumbering, and makes me often cry to Him. I cannot feel Him sweetly near, nor dare I conclude that He is very far off.

I have found some of Mr. Bunyan's and some of Mr. Huntingdon's words more blest to me than any human writings of late. No man describes my state so well as W. H., S. S. And though I often look for entire ruin, as to temporals and this world, I believe the Lord does not quit his hold of me, because He will not LET ME quite leave Him. He compels me to flee to his feet, holds me

up when falling, and raises me a little when down. I spend as much time as I can get with my Bible and my God, and my very soul longs and fairs for one sweet embrace from Him whom my soul loveth !

If I am left at any time to neglect SECRET PRAYER, I sensibly feel it in the pulpit ; and when He enables me to cry often to Him—if I get nothing then, I sometimes get a sweet return of prayer whilst I am delivering my testimony.

I have some of my best times in the house of God. I had a very precious time last Sabbath morning. I have had many TESTIMONIES of the Lord's blessing the word, both written and verbal.

There is a people at Gower-street that I should have no objection to live and die with, for they are in my heart. But my dear Lord only knows what He means to do with me.

I am thrown wholly upon God ; other refuge have I none.

. ED. BLACKSTOCK.

London, 1843.

. WE must all have troubles from some quarter. An afflicted tabernacle is the go-cart in which God teaches his children to walk. Bitter herbs and paschal lamb is a treat for prodigals. It is better to endure the rod, than wear a fool's cap and bells.

But, for the SANCTIFIED rod, motley would be the only garb now. The *effects* of the furnace, and not the furnace itself, show the Lord's pleasure or displeasure. When Ephraim no longer gads after vanities, or pouts in the corner, but shows a broken spirit, and a resigned and obedient will, God calls him "a pleasant child."

Erewhile this affliction shall pass away as the waters of Noah. God has set his bow in this cloud, and when the sun shines out again, you shall see it. His covenant of peace shall not be removed. "Oh, thou afflicted, tossed

with tempest, and not comforted: behold I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agate, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be their peace." &c. Stormy afflictions are God's cradle, wherein He rocks his peevish children; whilst, like a fond nurse, He sings a heavenly lullaby, and rocks us into peace.

The house of mourning is the school to which God puts his children, when He would bring them forward. There I have learnt more in six hours, than in twelve months' play with the boys and girls in the streets of Jerusalem.

Our daughters are to be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace: A PRUNED vine by the side of a house is an excellent ornament; ripe clusters are the effects of God's pruning; barren fenny lands are improved by under-draining, paring, and burning.

. The great desire of my soul (at times) is to get near the Lord in LIVING COMMUNION: when there, I love Him, love his people, I love his word, I love his precepts. I feel myself right in the main things, and see a probability of being set right in everything that is essential or very important in his sight: this is the best way I have ever found of getting to the knowledge of his secrets.

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him: He will show them his covenant: and truly when He fills my heart with his love, I would neither stop at water nor fire to serve Him, but still I wish to do all things in LOVE. I can this morning feelingly say, "I esteem all Thy commandments concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way. What I know not (that would be good for me to know), that teach Thou me."

I would fear no human frowns, court no human smiles, shun no cross, and wilfully slight no divine institutions: but oh! I feel that I am not perfect in knowledge. I am often ashamed of my remaining ignorance, and have still more cause to be ashamed that I know so much which I have not practised, and which makes me cry, "O wretched

man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ”

I want a teachable spirit, that I may sit at his feet, to learn of Him that is meek and lowly in heart. . . .

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

London, 1843.

. . . . I HAVE been making some solèmn confessions and serious appeals to God, and a measure of peace has flowed into my conscience.

On the Sabbath morning I again sweetly found my gracious God in his sanctuary ; and, bless his holy name ! He was gracious and merciful. I spoke from 1 Pet. v. 6—9, in a way of lecture. The morning was spent in considering the contents of the sixth verse : “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.”

In the house of God, I am often carried forward with such light and power by my gracious Master as I cannot afterwards detail. I remarked that my unusually long text contained words that, more than twenty-five years ago, were accompanied to my soul with an extraordinary degree of heavenly POWER and DELIGHT—that, as I could not describe the comfort which I had received from these words, so I could not express the great trials which I had had concerning their fulfilment.

The HAND of God I considered as being expressive of his almighty power, displayed in the work of creation, in the work of Christ finished on the cross, in the work of the Spirit wrought in the hearts of his people, and in his most wise and holy providence. I glanced at the work, the order, and the beauties of creation, and viewed the material universe, the operation of his hand, as a splendid specimen of the wisdom, goodness, and almighty *power* of God.

I then noticed that mighty power as displayed on the

cross, to save the chief of sinners. "Christ the POWER OF God, and the wisdom of God," &c. Then I took a more particular view of his hand, as conspicuous in drowning the old world, and in saving Noah and his family—in destroying Sodom and Gomorrha, and saving Lot—in the plagues which He brought on Egypt—and in his bringing his people out of the house of bondage—in delivering them at the Red Sea—making a passage through it for his chosen, and drowning their adversaries.

I showed how He led, protected, and fed them in the wilderness, "as an eagle stirreth up her nest," &c. I spoke of many such things, done in old time, and of his eternal purpose, his wise and holy plan for his own glory, and the good of his church ; his eye from eternity beholding all beings, times, places, circumstances, and events ; his fixed purpose, his mighty hand, as laying hold of all things, and carrying forward every event.

I observed that all his saints were under his hand, and also all their enemies, and that from UNDER his hand there was NO RISING UP ; that in Him we lived, moved, and had our being—temporally and spiritually—and that nothing, save the mighty hand of God, had brought us to see that day ; that when the believer enjoyed the utmost prosperity, and was surrounded with friends as numerous as summer flowers, even then he had nothing to support him but the mighty hand of God, and that he had nothing less to support him in his bleakest winters of adversity.

"Humble yourselves under the," &c. I noticed how deeply, through the fall, we are tainted by PRIDE, and represented that to the Christian pride is the worst of all sins, save unbelief. I observed that all our heavy trials, temptations, furnaces, fires, were amongst other things designed by the grace of God to HUMBLE our souls, and save us from every kind of pride.

That real heart humility was the principal adorning of a true Christian ; that of late years I found no peace in my soul, but as the Lord was pleased to enable me to take ALL things just as He saw good to send them, and to fall broken and SUBMISSIVE into his hand.

“That He may exalt you.” Exaltation by his Spirit, and by his providence. Before true honour is true humility. He exalts us by his Spirit, when He has well broken and humbled us. He, by the power of his Spirit, lifts us up feelingly into Christ, roots us in Him, and makes over to us Christ, in all that He is and has, as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption—our light, life, peace, and salvation. That then, indeed, we feel well. He exalts us to walk with Him in NEAR COMMUNION, with the life and light of God in our souls, and his blessed peace in our consciences.

That He exalts by his PROVIDENCE. And here I glanced at my brother Joseph—noticed his premonitory dreams, his faith, and its trials by the envy of his brethren—how they sold him, and how he was again sold, cast into prison under a false charge, and his feet hurt with fetters: “Until the time that his word came, the word of the Lord tried him.” Pa. cv. 19. I took a turn with brother Job, &c. (which for brevity’s sake I omit.)

I noticed that the godly have sometimes a PROMISE SENT, or an impression given, and FAITH bestowed for the time, to believe that they shall one day have the promised blessing. Then a long train of providences occur, most of them appearing cross and contrary to the word; that here lies the great TRIAL work, and FIGHT of FAITH! here is the faith and patience of the saints.

That our choicest mercies usually come to us as Isaacs raised from the very dead! That, in prospect, the “DUE TIME” often appears a long time. That God’s promise never fails; and the way which faith and patience take, is to hope, and pray, and wait for his appearance. That the vision is sure to speak at length; that the darkest clouds are often big with the richest mercies; that our unbelief, and pride, and peevishness, do what they can to obscure the hand of God, and spoil the appearances of his dispensations; that to be exalted to hope, trust, wait, and pray, is the best way out of difficulties.

That it is well for the Christian to be kept from dreaming—from vain imaginations of future EARTHLY good; that,

as regards these things, chastened expectations are best for the soul. That godly contentment lies *not* in being raised by Providence to the height of our ambitious views and hopes, but in having our minds brought down to the will and way of God.

That to be made and kept HUMBLE is the great SECRET of godliness; that with such He will surely dwell, and from such He will withhold no good thing.

This is but a meagre skeleton. . . . I felt far more of the power and goodness of God than I can express. What a mercy for me!

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

London, 1843.

. You can hardly have had greater prejudices against London than I have had; but I am a living monument of the Lord's mercy, to prove that He can sweetly visit his poor children, and that He does so in this modern Sardis.

Yes, my friend, I am a feeling witness at the moment of writing this; for I bless his holy name, He has just broken into my poor heart with these words, and I have the FEELING IN GENJOYMENT of them—"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith He which hath the sharp sword with two edges: I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, even where Satan dwelleth."

O my gracious God, thou knowest WHERE to find, and HOW to comfort thy poor suffering children. Christ is not divided. He is all in all. Then, if you can, help me to praise Him, for looking through the lattices upon, and breaking down, by means of manifested mercy, a poor, despised, sinful being. O heaven of heavens! what a prodigy I seem to myself this moment, "cast down," but, bless his name! I cannot now say, nor comforted.

I sat down to write this note in fear and in deep distress; but a shine of the Lord's Spirit has visited my heart, and I feel as if I could weep my soul away.

"A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing;
Nor fear, with Thy righteousness on,
My person and offering to bring.
The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do;
My Saviour's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view."

Yes, I can now feelingly and triumphantly say—

"My name from the palms of his hands
Eternity will not erase;
Impress'd on his heart it remains,
In marks of indelible grace.
Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven."

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

London, 1844.

. WHEN travellers are environed by the mountains of Wales, it may afford a momentary gratification to receive a letter from an old friend, even if it should have nothing in it but words!

I have been within three miles of Flintshire, and within sight of some of those mountains. I fear there is but little preaching of the truth in Wales (though there is much noise). However, there is more noise than work everywhere.

It has often been a grief to me that I have returned such poor fruits to God for his great mercies to me. When I had no thoughts of Him, or concern for my soul, He called me suddenly and powerfully. He deeply convinced me of sin, soon instructed me to pray to Him, revealed to me the way of life, gave me faith and repent-

ance. drew me entirely out of worldly company, and revealed his Son to me in so gracious and powerful a manner. that, hard as my heart is, I can seldom reflect upon that work without admiring the riches of the grace so bounteously bestowed upon so great a sinner !

But what have been my returns ! Alas, I have bitter cause to grieve that I should remain such a lifeless lump of ice ! Bunyan, Colonel Gardiner, and others, were like myself great sinners before conversion ; but, after their calling, they appeared the living epistles of Christ. “ Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier the myrtle-tree : and it shall be to the Lord for a name, and for an everlasting sign, which shall not be cut off.” When God takes a great sinner and makes a myrtle-tree of him, and works in him mightily, so that he yields much fruit, the sight is pleasant indeed !

The believer’s barrenness is to be laid at his own door. his fruitfulness must be wholly ascribed to the Lord. We are naturally barren : our evil hearts are like an ungrateful soil that mocks the husbandman’s labour, yielding nothing but briers and thorns ! And yet I dread the ploughing up of this fallow ground, because the flesh loves ease. Still, I do not wish to deny whatever God has wrought in or by me. I often venture to think *that* of myself, which I should not like to hear from my opponents. A strange kind of humility this !

I knew not how to quicken my own soul, nor how to enliven the souls of others. I find the exhortations and the precepts difficult to handle. The way to a believer’s working powers is through his HEART ; and the way to get into his heart is very mysterious. We must show him his inability, point to where his great strength lies, and then testify of Christ : if a divine unction falls upon his spirit, and makes known to him the loving-kindness of God, he is neither destitute of will nor power to work : at such times, a little child may lead him.

This is the best, and indeed the only, way I have yet discovered, to induce a line of sound practice in the tried believer : but I feel as if I wished to know much more of

the BLESSED ART of stirring up the Lord's saints to holy activity in the cause of Christ. I sometimes think that we who are established in the truth seem to be the laziest drones in the hive! I have too much reason to say so of myself.

How rare a thing it is amongst us to REDEEM the TIME, though so often told that the days are evil! I have seen some labourers who would neither work themselves, nor allow others to do so if they could hinder them. Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him! The apostle may well call God the God of patience, for He displays much patience and long-suffering towards the most of us!

Could we see our own state and that of Zion, the sight would appal us,—darkness, coldness, indifference, deadness, and carnality! Sabbaths profaned—the word neglected—the closet shunned—prayer omitted—mercies slighted—privileges abused—the bounties of heaven perverted—Christ and heavenly things treated with cold neglect—everywhere want of union, of love, life, feeling—zeal extinguished to a spark—all snared in holes, hid in prison-houses, with this motto affixed thereto, “I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.” Not only an absence of holy fruits, but the garden overgrown with briers, thorns, and noxious weeds; divided into sects, parties, and subdivisions; agreed in scarcely anything but detraction.

Yet I would fain hope there are a few—one here, another there—living more simply to the honour of Jehovah. Although no painter, I have drawn a portrait which makes me start. Peradventure, the features are distorted—I would it might prove so! But let us glance at the reverse of the picture. And “ye are complete in Him.”

Now and then I have felt a power that has lifted my soul up into Christ. I have happily felt myself ONE WITH HIM, and by faith have had a glimpse of that beloved Object at whom the Father looks with complacency—the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. There I have seen immaculate beauty—Him who is the storehouse of wisdom, whose righteousness

and make all his goodness pass before you in the way. May He empower you to say, "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me!" May He turn your captivity, until you are like those that dream! May you have the Lord Christ as a travelling companion, and then every place you come to will be your HOME.

For without Him the travelling Christian is like a bird wandering from her nest.

. ED. BLACKSTOCK.

London, October, 1844.

. O how often I long for a solitary ramble in the country, where I might freely breathe the sweet savour of the fields, and address my fervent supplications unto God, as in days of old.

Here, all is bustle and carnality. I less wonder than I did at the poet for saying—

"Weary of earth, myself, and sin,
Dear Jesus, set me free;
And to Thy glory take me in,
For there I long to be."

A carnal nature is the great secret of all this uneasiness; true wisdom consists in being CONTENT with the Lord's appointments, and in cheerfully submitting to his will! Here I desire to come this morning, and to take things as they come.

Real communion with God is the only sweetener of the Christian life. With this, a man may be content in country or town, in a palace or in a prison; without it, we are content NO WHERE! The OLD creation never was meant to satisfy the NEW CREATURE: this must live upon God in Christ, or starve! Wherever He records his name, wherever He reveals his face, is sacred:—this contents—this satisfies.

The only true honour is that which cometh from God—the true riches are those which never perish—the best society is that of "the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven." The best

bread is that which cometh from God, the hidden manna—the best waters are those of the sanctuary—the sweetest pleasures are those which flow from God's right hand; these have no poison in them, and leave no sting behind.

A little while, and the earth and its grovelling society will be to us as nothing; yea, the sun, moon, and stars will have sunk in endless night—the world and its scenes will have fled for ever from us; we shall have plunged into eternity, where the former things will have passed away for ever, and to us all things will have become new!

I seriously ask myself this morning, how matters stand between God and conscience? Alas, I can give but a poor answer—mercies slighted, privileges abused! "The law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin; the good that I would, I do not; but the evil that I would not, that I do. O wretched man that I am!"

I have no personal righteousness, and I abhor the doctrine of human merit. I would look to the all-perfect righteousness of the Son of God, and lay the finger of my feeble faith upon the hem of Christ's garment.

"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness,
My beauties are, my heavenly dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these array'd,
With joy shall I lift up my head."

I long, too, for that divine anointing which would convert my soul into the garden of Christ, and renew in me the holy fruits of faith, repentance, hope, love, holy fear, humility, resignation, submission, and patience, that I might say,—“Other lords have had the dominion over us, but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name.

"O for a glance of heavenly day,
To take this stubborn stone away!
And melt with beams of love divine.
This heart, this frozen heart of mine!"

I would fain be as a living branch united to Jesus my living Vine; without Him (severed from Him) I can do nothing! Severed from Him Israel is an empty vine, that bringeth forth fruit unto himself. Vitally united to Him, we live, flourish, and bear fruit. "Awake, O north

"A new commandment write I unto you, that ye love one another." Through the Divine anointing, this commandment has not been hard to keep between us!—no grievous yoke to either of us! May the dear Comforter anoint again and again both our souls, until our hearts burn within us by the way.

I have a desire to know how you fare, whether you are in the valley, or on the mount!—in the pit, or on the rock!—at a distance, or living near!—in Baca's vale, or in the banqueting house!—whether you are in the furnace, or being brought forth as gold!—whether dark, or light!—in the valley of death's shadow, or under the rays of the sun!—whether tried and tempted in the wilderness or fed with manna!—whether you are in a tempest, or enjoying peace!—murmuring, or peacefully trusting!—whether rebelling, or singing the high praises of Jehovah!—whether you are at the lean breasts of creature comforts, or are as one whom his mother comforteth!—whether you are a peevish, or a weaned child? Love is stronger than death, jealousy cruel as the grave, the coals thereof (to a once favoured soul) are coals of juniper, which send forth a most vehement flame, and are often overruled to make the WANDERING BRIDE cry out, "Set me as a seal upon thine arm, as a seal upon thine heart."

"Seal me upon thine arm, and wear
That pledge of love for ever there."

But wherever you are, my dear friend, I believe that you are in the best place for accomplishing the gracious, fast ripening purposes of Jehovah, and these are purposes of grace, love, and mercy to you.

"Too wise to be mistaken He,
Too good to be unkind!"

For myself, I have been in many different paths of experience since I last wrote—sometimes very dark, then visited with bright gleams of the Day-spring from on high—sometimes taken captive and in bondage—sometimes like the wild ass, when his bands are loosed—sometimes in Baca's vale, well scratched with thorns and briers—now

at Bochim—now at Bethel—now under the weeping-willows, and then rejoicing in hope of a brighter day—sometimes at the ends of the earth, the world's end, and my wit's end, and then looking to Jesus—often as one friendless and alone, as the sparrow on the house top, and then favoured with a momentary visitation from the best of friends—sometimes provoking the Lord to jealousy, and then in my turn being provoked to jealousy—sometimes turning from the Lord, and then compelled to turn to Him again—sometimes like Peter, following afar off, and then favoured with close cleavings—often tried to the last extremity, and wondering what the end of these things will be, then kept in peace whilst the mind was stayed on Jehovah.

In a word—

“My soul through many changes goes,—
His love no variation knows.”

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

1845.

. . . . You may be sure that I always remember, with warm Christian affection, a brother with whom I have so long walked in close fellowship, and who always was FAITHFUL and TRUE to ME. I wish you well with all my heart!

I remember the hard bondage under which you had to pass for many years, as to temporal things, and I often think of a dream which you had concerning a sealed letter being delivered to you. You then told me, “The Lord would find you a people.” In a few weeks after, you were called to speak at —; and when the Lord shut that door, He opened one at — for you, and I rejoice that He has done so. May He make and keep you faithful unto death, and give you a crown of eternal life! You have a good experience, which is the best and safest basis of a Gospel ministry.

I remember another thing, too, that the Lord gave you—a turn for reading the word of God. THE HOLY GHOST ALONE CAN MAKE A MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST; a man's own

experience is the best thing to work upon. "A good man out of the good treasure of his HEART bringeth forth good things." THEORETIC knowledge is a vain bubble; love edifieth, whilst naked and empty knowledge puffeth up. It feeds hypocrites, but makes empty the soul of the hungry, and causes the drink of the thirsty to fail. "Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers with thee." Prov. v. 15—17.

Under the blessed POWER of the Holy Ghost, a careful reading of the word, temptation, meditation, and especially frequent and fervent PRAYER, will make an able minister of Jesus Christ. For my own part, I should not choose to follow any living preacher (that I know of). Moses, Job, and David in his sweet Psalms, are blessed preachers—Elijah the Tishbite—the truly evangelical Isaiah—the weeping prophet Jeremiah—the allegorical preacher Ezekiel—the lesser prophets—Christ, our dear Lord and Master—Paul, the great commentator, and full mouthed preacher—Peter, with his golden chains of truth and simplicity—James, the honest, practical preacher—John, in his sea of divine love—Jude, the just and the faithful. And, for the understanding of the STATE of the CHURCH in the present time, I would especially look into Jeremiah, and into the Revelation, by the prophet or exile of Patmos. The way to God in his glory is a narrow path, between two deep ditches—PHARISAICAL PRIDE, and LICENTIOUSNESS and SLOTH (as Mr. Hart calls it).

According to my own experience, I sometimes keep company with one old saint of God, and sometimes with another, as I find them fit my own case and feelings best. In the first Five Books of Moses, I find the foundation of every truth and of every testimony, that is afterwards drawn out at full length by others. In the Book of Job, I see the picture of a man of God suffering under the storms of trial, temptation, and adversity.

In the Book of Psalms, I find every inch of experience that I ever had, told too in a wonderful way. Then I see

into a man's heart, who was a man after God's own heart, inasmuch as he had a deep experience of, and fellowship with, the SUFFERINGS of Christ. In the Book of Psalms, may be found gospel food for every day in the year; there I find ALL my ins and outs, frames and feelings, ups and downs, trials and afflictions, hopes and fears, delineated by a master hand, by the sweetest singer in our Israel.

In the Book of Canticles, I see the Bride and the heavenly Bridegroom, and their sweetest communion and fellowship. I can enter this Holy of Holies the best, when the BRIDEGROOM is with me, and on high days and Gospel festivals. In Isaiah, I find many rich clusters of the rich grapes of Eshcol—the promises. In Jeremiah, I see depicted the winterly state of the Church of God. In Ezekiel, I see at a distance grand Gospel hieroglyphics. In Daniel, I take a peep at a Hebrew in prayer to his God, in despite of the king of Babylon, and a prophetic representation of the times that shall go over the Church of God—the rise, long reign, and final demolition of Antichrist. In Hosea, I see my own backsliding heart portrayed.

In Christ's personal testimony, I see the grand Master of Assemblies giving out his word—"The Lord gave the word; great was the company of them that published it." This testimony is plain, simple, deep, full, striking, noble, majestic, and piercing. He stands more than head and shoulders higher than any of his brethren. In the Acts, I see a history of the Holy Ghost's outpouring and ministry; here I look for the beauty and simplicity of Christianity, before the foxes had had time to walk over the walls of Zion.

In the Epistle to the Romans, I see the Lord's precious body of sound divinity, from the pen of the (little) great theological doctor, Paul. In the Epistle to the Corinthians, I see how that standard-bearer preached Christ and Him crucified; first preaching JESUS CHRIST, and if the people grew tired of that, then turning his text, and preaching CHRIST JESUS.

In his Epistle to the Galatians, I see him cutting up the mongrels, whose heads are Calvinistic, but who in HEART, are merit-mongers, and factors of indulgences. Ravening

wolves, covered with a bit of sheep's skin, but "Satan transformed into an angel of light;" Luther, in his rough way, calls them "Wolves." They should all be compelled to wear a shave and a cowl, that people might see they were in Paul, like a very bold man, stands by the Gospel, challenges, and anathematizes an angel from should dare to preach any other Gospel than he had preached.

The Epistle to the Ephesians is a short but a sive letter to the CHURCH of Christ, and to the Church. The Epistle to the Philippians is full of love and caution. The Epistle to the Colossians Christ is to be ALL in everything to her.

The two Epistles to the Thessalonians are sincere, but weak and timid brethren, the feeble folk, who build their houses on the sand. Paul turns wet nurse, and dandles them like a child. His Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon contain several little ordination sermons, to whose heads no theological doctor ever laid his hands.

James holds to his Master's caution, that the fruits ye shall know them," and teaches us, to listen to the clappers of PROFESSORS, as to the fruits. Peter is doctrinal, experimental, practical, and cautionary, but not systematical; no bad shepherd, but an excellent watcher of the tender lambs.

I had forgotten Paul's Leviticus—I mean his Epistle to the Hebrews, and perhaps his master-piece, the Epistle to the Romans, teaches the Jews to condemn their dead sacrifices, and trust to the living sacrifice of the great High Priest of our profession. Jude is an awful, but faithful Epistle against wicked pastors and wanton gospellers. The Epistles show that they were written by men who had leaned on Jesus' breast at supper. He teaches that God is light, and that God is love, and insists upon the Saviour's new commandment, that ye LOVE one another. Yet he is very faithful, and full of warnings against the enemies of the Church.

But of the Revelation I hardly know what to say.

There is the opening a grand vision of Jesus Christ amongst his ministers and churches! A most solemn and salutary address to each of the angels of the seven churches in Asia, unfolding the seven states of the Church of Christ,—a delineation of POPERY, with its rise, progress, and bloody reign—its being wounded and healed again, its second rise, and final fall—the driving of the true Church into the wilderness—the LOW estate of VITAL GODLINESS in the present time—the slaying of the witnesses—the Spirit of life afterwards descending upon them—the Church raised up into a heavenly state—the destruction of the Papacy and dead professors by the carnal sword.

The falling of the latter rain, and the final harvest of the Church upon earth, and the end of time and all material things. I consider this book, and that of Daniel, deep and mysterious; many of the things contained in them will, perhaps, never be understood until they are accomplished. I do not think by this brief rehearsal to teach you anything new—your mind, as well as mine, has no doubt been long exercised in them.

I see the ministry at present to be in a strange state.

. . . . ED. BLACKSTOCK.

1845.

. . . . GRACE, mercy, and peace be with you, from Him who has promised; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.

Job says, “He performeth the thing that is appointed for me, and many such things are with Him.” It is hard for us to say what is in the believer’s lot, for many things befall us which we once little expected. The worst thing attending fiery trials is, that they seem to estrange us from God. We know not how to reconcile these sharp things with our common ideas of God’s loving-kindness to his children.

“If the Lord loved me,” says the poor soul, “surely He would not have run upon me like a giant, and have visited me with breach upon breach,” when, peradventure,

the very reason why the Lord has visited us with these strokes is, because we are his CHILDREN.

Yes, my beloved brother, we are his naughty children. How often have those words smitten me—"Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee!" And when the Lord saw it He abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters. And He said, "I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith." Deut. xxxii. 20. "I hid me, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." Isaiah lvii. 17.

. When God very sharply chastens poor Ephraim, hides his face from him, and seems wroth with him, Ephraim is almost sure to be angry in his turn, yea, to murmur, fret, and rebel like a devil, during which time no deliverance is wrought, but everything gets worse and worse, and Ephraim and his God get further asunder. Oh, the horrible and desperate rebellion of the human heart!

Poor old limping Jacob says—"All these things are against me." Crabbed old Jonah says—"I do well to be angry." Angry with whom? Why, with the God of the Hebrews! Then says poor Asaph—"Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will He be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promises fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath He in anger shut up his tender mercies." Psalm lxxvii.

The Psalmist said in haste, "All men are liars," the prophets of God as well as the rest! that was very near high treason, for it was almost insinuating that God Himself did not speak the truth. But poor Jeremiah goes further, and says—"Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt Thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?" Jeremiah xv. 18.

But, let God be TRUE, and every man a LIAR! Jacob is obliged to eat his own words, and say—"It is enough. He is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die." and the Lord better than his fears, and was blest

with more at his latter end than he had at his beginning. Asaph was obliged to own that this was his infirmity. The Psalmist was constrained to love the Lord, because he had heard his voice and his supplications.

Poor peevish Jonah is now amongst the heavenly songsters; wondering at his former unworthiness and God's goodness to him, he sings a bold note in heaven. Jeremiah was afterwards obliged to own, that "the heart was deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," and that blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. You and I, my dear brother, have not got a pebble to throw at any of these our tried brethren, for we have too often FELT that we have ALL their wretched dross in our vile hearts. Yet, since the depths of hell are our DESERT, may the Lord keep us from murmuring and rebellion, for these only make bad worse.

Poor Joseph was in prison, and, "until the time that his word came, the word of the Lord tried him." Daniel was made prisoner before Achish, the king of Gath, when he feigned madness, and scrabbled on the walls. Jeremiah was shut up in the low dungeon, and was fed with bread and water, and hardly enough of that. Christ was taken from prison and from judgment, so that He knows how to VISIT captives.

Peter was in prison, until the angel threw open his prison doors, and knocked off his fetters. Paul was often in prison, and was fetched from thence to the block, where his head was severed from his body, and his soul flew to heaven out of the way of Nero.

Daniel was incarcerated, and that moreover in a den of lions; but Daniel's God shut their mouths! they had no power to bite. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, were imprisoned in a hot fiery furnace; but the form of the fourth was like unto the Son of God, and his presence made fire as soft as air. "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not,"—and this is a way which you once thought not of. Think it not strange.

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you." May the Lord the Spirit make this word BELOVED sound louder and louder, and prove

sweeter than your bitters, and heavier than all your troubles. The 102d Psalm I think now belongs to you; it is entitled, "A prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before God."

The Lord help my dear brother to say with Jonah, when in the fish's belly, "I am cast out of Thy sight, but I will look again towards Thine holy temple." Men and devils can do no more than the Lord permits.

"My Father's hand prepares the cup,
And what HE WILLS IS BEST."

You will say, "I can neither see it, nor feel it to be so." HE sees it to be so,—surely though this cup is bitter, it is among the "ALL things."

My brother, the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. That you are a real child of his, I believe in my very heart and soul; and I feel that word too, "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them that suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; and, what is far more, Jesus the Head sympathises with his suffering members. "In all their affliction He was afflicted."

I deeply regret that you have not opportunity to retire, but still

"He hears the groans of his elect,
And hates to put away."

He hath made a prison into a paradise before now, and a den of thieves into a house of prayer. "Thou hast showed Thy people hard things, Thou hast made them to drink of the wine of astonishment; they were drunk with it, and at their wit's end." And I confess these are HARD things—not hard as coming from the hand of God, for He punisheth us less than our iniquities deserve.

But they are hard indeed to our reason, and to our carnal feelings. Reason cannot live here, and faith has enough to do to lie under it. "Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High: therefore He brought down their heart with labour; they fell down,

and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men ! for He hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron asunder. Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted." Psalm cvii. 10—17.

Oh how I have been made to feel the last words for myself ! Lot's experience was bitter when he was in Sodom ; he was much annoyed with the filthy conversation of the wicked ; but may the Lord enable you to keep your mouth with a bridle, while the wicked are before you ! and may He help this poor prisoner to groan it out before the Lord ! He is able to deliver, and I trust that He will yet deliver you from every evil work, and from every evil worker, and enable you to say—"Our soul has escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowler."

May the dear Lord be your comfort and your Comforter ! May He bind up that which is broken, and strengthen that which is sick, though He should destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them with judgment. O Daniel, thy God is *able* to deliver thee from the lions' mouths. May He deeply engrave these words on your heart—"And call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

"His love in times past forbids me to think
He'll leave thee at last in trouble to sink.
Each sweet Ebenezer thou hast in review,
Confirms his good pleasure to help thee quite through."

Yes, as a dying saint once said, "QUITE THROUGH." He will not always chide, my brother, neither will He keep his anger for ever. For though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.

"Mercies which all thy praise excel :
Thy Jesus hath done all things well."

Think not that you are forgotten, for verily I am afflicted in your afflictions. I hope we shall still bear you upon

our hearts before the throne. "Wherefore, be strong and of a good courage ; fear not, nor be afraid of them, for the Lord thy God He it is that doth go with thee ; He will not fail thee nor forsake thee." Deut. xxxi. 6.

My dear wife and I unite in kindest Christian love to you. And I remain, in the strongest Christian affection, thine in the Lord,

EDW. BLACKSTOCK.

MR. BLACKSTOCK *to one of his Hearers, on the subject of Marriage.*

London, 1846.

. ALTHOUGH I have written to several persons, on the subject on which I am now addressing you, with no good result, yet I am desirous to use my pen on this occasion ; though fully aware that when the affections of a young woman are entangled, she is apt not only to turn a deaf ear to a poor servant of Jesus Christ, but even to Christ Himself.

If you look around you, you will see thousands of women who, for the sake of gratifying their own carnal inclinations, have risked everlasting destruction ! Therefore, if you are giving your company to a carnal young man, it is no TRIVIAL snare that you are caught in. This was one of those SINS against which God by his prophets awfully warned the nation of the Jews (times that I cannot number). Yes, and many heavy denunciations He brought out against them.

The marrying of "strange wives" drew them into IDOLATRY, and idolatry drew them away from God ; and for this He sent against them the plague, fire, and sword, and at last cut them down as a nation, and damned them in heaps.

Do you not remember how the plague broke out, and took off thousands of them ? Read the 25th chapter of Numbers. But you will say, that was for committing fornication with the Midianitish women. They were their

wIVES, but God calls it whoredom. And I believe that if a godly woman marries a carnal man, believing him to be such, God calls that whoredom to the present day.

They marry according to the laws of the land, but I believe they live in fornication in God's account. And if you marry a carnal man, it will be the same as if you should say,—“Lord Jesus, I give **THEE** up now. I love this man better than I love Thee. I am tired of Thy service ; I therefore now **join** myself to Baal-Peor. I wilfully break **THY LAWS**, and trample upon Thy blood, righteousness, and promises ; and, for the sake of a carnal man, I am willing to sell my soul to the devil.”

You **KNOW** he is a carnal man, and attends the devil's synagogue,—I mean the play-house. The fault of his marrying you would not be his—it would be yours ; he does not know what he is doing,—*you do*. You know, my friend, that if he is not a vessel of mercy, he is a child of the devil. Would you wish to give your body, which we hope belongs to Christ, to a child of the devil ? God forbid ! “Be ye not unequally yoked.” A child of God with an imp of the devil ! “What fellowship hath Christ with Belial ?” that is, the devil, the god of this world. Read 2 Cor. vi. from the 14th verse to the end.

You are, I hope, a convinced sinner ; you have sought the Lord. But **HIS SALVATION** you have not yet **ENJOYED** peradventure ; and if you now, after this warning, marry that man, it is a thousand to one if ever you do enjoy God's salvation ! For, in taking this step, you would sin awfully, sin wilfully, and even despise the laws of Christ ; and surely that would not be the way to obtain Christ's favour.

After marriage, if you bent your knees to Christ, you would have to take your idol in your arms. Would you be likely to succeed ? After marriage, you must either love or hate your husband ; if you were to love him he would be your idol, and Christ would say, “Let her put her adulteries from between her breasts before she comes to me for my mercy.”

With your idol there, you might go to the throne a

thousand times, and come away worse than you went; then perhaps, you would turn to your idol, and dote upon him. Could he enlighten thy soul? Could he heal thy soul's wounds? Could he bind up thy broken heart? Could he save thee? No, verily!

When the honeymoon was over, consider how much of the heart-ache you would be likely to have! It would seem to you as if you had SOLD CHRIST for a pleasure not worth a straw! If you still loved and followed your husband, it would then be FAREWELL, CHRIST! farewell, heaven! farewell, ye saints of God! And until you were WEANED from your husband, I will venture to prophesy you would NEVER FIND THE LORD, if you sought Him for thirty years to come!

Consider what thou art doing, my daughter. But suppose your love to your present admirer should turn to hatred, then what a marriage it would be! While you were praying, he would perhaps be cursing. If you asked a blessing on your food, how could you expect a blessing to come upon it?

If you attended chapel, he perhaps would betake himself to the alehouse. He would very likely grow jealous of you, and make you jealous by keeping company with such as you would not like. Read the life of a bad man. How would you like to hear the ministers of the Gospel—the Gospel, the saints, and the Bible, reviled and cursed! This would of a truth be connubial bliss!

Are you prepared to go with him to the play-house, to pastimes, and worldly pleasures? Could you endure the company he would keep? Remember, also, that the laws of the land would give him full power over you; you would not then be your own mistress. If he wanted you to go out with him, could you always refuse? If you did, what could be the consequence? He may be, or appear, steady now, but what would he be then?

Bear in mind that you would have to engage at the altar to love, honour, and obey him. How could you engage this? How could you pull together, when he is pulling HELLWARD, and you HEAVENWARD!

Surely this would snap the bands of love, and thou wouldst have brought matters to a fine pass ! This union would be the worst thing that ever befell you yet. And how could you wish to be the wife you ought to be to this man, if you would be true to Christ ? For if you would be TRUE to Christ, you must hate the man. Luke xiv. 26. And this is not doing to others as you would wish to be done by.

Why should a DAUGHTER of CHRIST apply to the devil for a husband ? Is there never a God in Israel, that you should go to Beelzebub, the god of Ekron ? Therefore set Christ on the one hand, and this wicked man, this child of the devil, on the other, and if Christ be God, FOLLOW HIM ; if Baal be thy god, follow him.

It will be a denial of Christ, and "he that denieth me," says Christ, "will I deny before the angels of God." Wherefore, my friend, do not choose, if thou canst help it, a fool's paradise here ; do not venture thy soul for so small a price, but give up all for Christ, and let this carnal person go to his own company.

Perhaps you will think within yourself, "I did not think Mr. B—— would have written such a letter as this to me."

I have written to you as if you had been my own daughter. I have sought the welfare of thy precious, thy immortal soul. If you think it is too sharp, I assure you, according to the best of my belief, it is not near so sharp as the word of God is upon the subject. If you say, "I cannot see that the word of God is so severe upon this subject as your letter is," I will freely acknowledge that I had been called by grace many years before I saw THIS sin in the dreadful light I now see it in. The Lord led me from the beginning of the word to the end, and showed me that it was one of the GREATEST SINS a child of God could commit.

You may think that others have done the same before you ; but this is no excuse, and no palliation whatever. Some of God's children have committed murder and adultery ; but that is no reason why you or I should do

either of these things ! The mercy shown to them may not be shown to you, if you presume upon it.

To do it now, after such solemn warnings, would be to sin presumptuously ; and how do you know that it would not be the GREAT transgression ? I durst not venture to say it is not ! But, perhaps, you will say all this is needless, for I never yet made up my mind to have him ; but if you associate any longer with him, you do not know that you may not be ensnared past recall. If you play with fire, it were no wonder if you should be scorched. And who would put a fire in his bosom, and expect to escape unhurt.

This is a carnal temptation of the devil, who is trying to ENSNARE your poor soul. Poor bird ! he has got his bait, and his hook, and his gin laid ready for thy soul ! Escape for thy life ! look not behind thee ! Stay not in all the plain ! Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE !

It is my desire and prayer that thou mayest escape this snare of the fowler. The Lord is able to provide two husbands for you. He can become a husband to thy soul, and give thee one of his own sons, if he sees good. If thou wantest a husband, ASK thy Master Christ for one. I know, if you do so, He will never let the devil marry you to a carnal man ! And, for my own part, I must say I hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak. Neither will I believe as yet that you will do this thing, and rush upon the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler.

Do not ask the Lord if it is HIS WILL that you should have this man, for that would be tempting God. It is of no use to ask God to BREAK his own laws, for He will not do that for you, or me, or any one.

The Spirit of God and the word of God are both against it. Be like Mercy, in Bunyan's Pilgrim, and never have a clog to thy soul. With the best of wishes for thy soul's welfare,

I remain, thy faithful Pastor,
ED. BLACKSTOCK.

1846.

. . . HAVING you much upon my mind this morning, I feel inclined to write to you once more.

I have not been favoured to hear from you this long time. And as for myself, I have been very much occupied in a particular work, which for many years I have had a desire to attend to; so that I have lately neglected writing to most of the few friends who are left in the wilderness.

Yet my heart feels incapable of giving up OLD FRIENDSHIPS. I know not how others may find it, but I find my early friendships the best and the sweetest. I seem to be of so little value now to the professing world, that I seldom see the face of a new friend. Old men are like old horses, out of date;—perhaps this is wisely ordered, to teach us to survey, and by faith live upon, that inheritance which lies forward beyond the Jordan of death—an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. O for a few grapes of Eshcol, to increase our longing for the better land!

It may well be said that this life is like a panorama. Its ever varying scenes being constantly on the move, as life advances they seem to go more swiftly, and at length shift with such velocity, that it is like travelling on the railway, at the rate of thirty miles an hour! Houses, trees, and fields, pass behind us in such rapid succession as to confound us; so that we know very little of the journey, and can scarcely remember the stations where the train stopped.

Old and best friends are many of them dead and gone. The children we lately played with are married, and are fondling with their children. There seems to be a new set of actors on the stage of life—they push us old ones off, or become impatient for our departure. The current news is merely a history of births, deaths, and marriages. Life is like working at the tread-mill—all that we know of it is, that it is hard work.

It appears a house of correction,—a house of mourning,—a vale of tears,—a Bochim. We should hardly feel sure that we were the disciples of Christ if his CROSS were not

laid upon us to mortify indwelling sin, crucify us to the world, and the world to us.

My God seems to say to me—"Thou shalt not live in sin, I will mortify it to thee; thou shalt not live upon the world, I will first crucify it to thee, and then thee to it; so that thou shalt either live on heavenly food, or starve." He seems to say, "Let dust be the serpent's meat."

"Laden with guilt, and full of fears,
I fly to Thee, my Lord;
And not a glimpse of hope appears,
But in Thy written word."

So I am constrained to fly to the written word. My growth in the knowledge of it is slow; I pore and ponder upon the latter, to see if I can catch a RAY or two of celestial light falling upon a single verse of the sacred page. I cry, Lord, help me! I search from Genesis to the Revelation; at length I find a word that meets my case, and fits my feelings.

The Lord assists me to meditate upon it; I lose some of my sorrows on the road. And now I get from under the LETTER into the Spirit; this brings a little light into my soul, raises my hopes, sinks my fears of falling, strengthens my confidence in God, as my covenant God and Father, brings a peace and quiet into my conscience; and now I admire the word of God, and say to my soul—What a TREASURE is here! How PRECIOUS is this word, when we are at the house of the INTERPRETER!

I see now, in the first Five Books of Moses, an epitome of all that follows after. There I see my brother Job suffering under the storms of adversity, and the end of the Lord, that He is VERY pitiful and of tender mercy. In the Psalms of David, I see the INSIDE works of a Christian; there I find every inch of experience I ever had, depicted in a living, powerful, and most striking way.

Here is a graphic description of all I ever knew of the world, of myself, of my God. I find these words of the wise as goads to prick my sides, that, as a bullock, I may move in the yoke over the furrowed field,—and as nails fastened by the Master of Assemblies, given from one

shepherd. I never feel better now than when these nails are anew fastened in my heart.

I have been with my brother David in the pit, on the rock, in the dark, and in the light; at a distance, and in the presence chamber; in days of fasting, and days of feasting; days of mourning and of weeping, and in days of rejoicing and dancing. I have worn sackcloth, and been dressed in the garments of salvation—with him I have sat on the stool of repentance, and with him felt a pardoned sinner.

I have, with him, been as a sheep strayed, and as a soul restored. I know the quagmire into which he FELL, and the blessed hand that lifted him out. I know, with him, what closes the lips of a child of God, what opens them, and how it is with a soul when his lips are open. I have been with him to prison, and to judgment, and have also, with him, been taught to COMMIT MY WAY to the Lord, that HE may bring forth my righteousness as the light, and my judgment as the noonday.

I have felt the groaning of the prisoner, and that “the Lord looses the prisoner.” I have, with him, been as a sheep put upon short commons, where I could hardly get a bite; and I have, with him, been in the sheepwalk, and found green pastures! Blessed be God! with him I can say, “The Lord is my Shepherd!” and I do, now and then, FEELINGLY believe “I shall not want.” Yet, still I am too often ready to halt, being a man of infirmity.

I have often, with him, been under death’s shadow, and have also been shown the pathway of life. I have seen in proper person his Doeg, the Edomite, the sons of Zeruiah, that were too hard for him, and also Ahithophel; and I have had to pray with David, “O Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!” I have walked with David barefooted, with my head covered, and weeping, up the ascent of Mount Olivet; and I have heard Shemei’s cursing.

I have FELT what David meant, when he said unto Zadok, “Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bri

me again, and show me both it and his habitation : but if He thus say, I have no delight in thee ; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him," 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26.

I have been with him, when he says, " I am a worm, and no man ; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." I have been an alien to my mother's children, and the zeal of the house of God has eaten me up. Reproach has well-nigh broken my heart, and princes have sat and spoken against me.

I think I know now WHY David was styled the man after God's own heart—even because he had deep fellowship with the sufferings of his Lord, and was a noble type of Him. I am ready to say that David is the man after MY own heart too. He was a wonder unto many, and he is still a wonder to ME ; for his testimony describes ALL my path, and has filled every crevice of my heart. I do not wonder that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, for *I* have felt the same knitting to him.

I have travelled with this man of God, from his being a stripling until he became old. He has been my best brotherly companion. I love the very name of David—which signifies "beloved." He was beloved of God, and he is beloved by me, with an affection that passes the love of women ! Old Wesley said, " There were better men in the Bible than David ;" but, if I except our Lord, *I* have seen none better, either in the Bible, or out of the Bible ! David is quite good enough for me. If he had been better, he would not have suited me so well ; however, he pleased the perfect hand ; and I take him in the lump,—I neither wish he had been better nor worse. I feel sure that if he had been either of these, he never could have got so deeply into my heart as he has.

I have travelled a great deal with this man of God, but I do not believe there is a man on earth that can go into his HEIGHTS and DEPTHS. And it is a question with me, if there has been one such since the days of the apostles ; and I believe most of them were babes and sucklings, com-

pared with this brave CHAMPION. Moses, and David, and Elijah, I call the King's champions of the Old Testament—King Christ's three mighty men of valour!

Peter was a sheep-feeder and a lamb-suckler. I view Paul as the King's champion under the Gospel. Augustine was a light shining with some clearness, in a DARK place.

CHAMPION LUTHER I deem to have been the most valiant man since the days of Paul. Bunyan was the father of Allegory, and a blessed bishop—a PREACHING PRISONER of JESUS CHRIST. Huntington was the metropolitan bishop.

In the present day, there are nothing but shadows of men! a great noise, and, for the most part, words! words! words! But to return to David; I see great depth in his wonderful writings. My plumbline is of little use, except to see that it is always too short to sound his depths. As a man of God, he is of a deep reach. I have often felt solemnly his last words, and I conclude that I shall fare WELL, if I can swim ashore on the blessed plank that carried him safely over, viz.—“Although my house be not so with God,” &c. Yet it is not the man I admire, but the GRACE of God in the man.

Solomon's song abounds with corn, wine, oil, milk, and honey. It is for the spouse, and for her chiefly, on high days and festivals. His Proverbs contain sweet rules of life. The Book of Ecclesiastes proves life to be a dream, the world a cheat, pleasure a poisoned bowl, and all things under the sun—without the favour and blessing of God—dust, vanity, vexation of spirit, and death! Solomon, in the two last-mentioned works, especially teaches kings and magistrates how to rule; but few of them have torn a leaf out of his book.

Isaiah carries the promise-basket, teeming full of the grapes of Eshcol. I have often looked after his basket, and longed for his ripe fruit.

Jeremiah sits in sackcloth, mourns and weeps, and drops many a tear over the captive daughter of Zion. It were well if we, who live in the present day, ATTENDED his LECTURES, for they seem to fit us amazingly. Ezekiel is a

master of hieroglyphics—a vindicator of God's righteousness—and has in his 16th chapter given a most glorious specimen of a gospel sermon, entitled "Grace abounding to the chief of sinners."

Hosea is a portrait painter, and gives us a living picture of backsliding Ephraim, and brings out much of mellow Gospel. Daniel presents the Church with the Book of Fate ; shows her the times that shall roll over her, and the rise and reign of Antichrist. Joel sounds an alarm in God's holy mountain, that belongs to us in the present day. And all the rest of the lesser prophecies have their excellences.

The four Evangelists form a square, and give, on four sides, a representation of the person, incarnation, miracles, preaching, character, doings, sufferings, temptations, blood-shedding, death, burial, rising, and ascension of the Son of God. Matthew is full, Mark is short and sententious, Luke evangelizes, and John is the most sublime and spiritual.

The Acts show the baptism of the Spirit, the preaching and success of the Apostles, and exhibits to us an excellent draft of primitive Christianity, before the gold had become DIM, and the most fine gold CHANGED. Here we have the most powerful of all sermons noticed, when the sword of the Spirit pricked in the heart no fewer than three thousand of the worst of sinners.

Here we see the REAL missionaries go forth, without a penny in their pockets, with no missionary society to pour in upon them its floods of pecuniary supplies. Numerous converts were raised, churches were planted, unity, brotherly love, and peace prevailed, and the universal Church of Christ became as a city set upon a hill !

Persecution raged, but raged in vain : the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church. That was a precious handful of first-fruits unto Christ ! The enemy, finding he was unable to conquer a lively, praying Church, tacked about, and transformed himself into an angel of light. He too must become a Gospel PREACHER ; he therefore found out suitable instruments for his purpose.

to preach ANOTHER gospel and another Jesus. Libertines put on the pharisaical gown, and drew over that a sheep's skin, and artfully MINGLED works and grace, law and gospel.

Thus the devil by his agents shred wild gourds, and mixed DEATH in the pot. And now, TWO sets of ministers, two sets of saints, and two sets of churches, were visible enough—as history informs us. God had a Church, and the Devil a chapel. Beguilement and seduction commenced their work, and the enemy showed himself clever in the ART of trepanning.

This was the mystery of iniquity which had begun to work, even before the Apostles left the field. The leaven was THERE and at work, which was afterward to be more and more manifest. The Epistle to the Romans is a precious body of divinity. In the first chapter, Paul unveils the Pagan idolatry, and exposes the nakedness and the pollution of heathen Rome—THAT FOUL SINK OF INIQUITY.

In the 2d chapter, Paul unmaskes the religion of the Jews; and in the 3d, he lays the axe to the root of the tree, and delivers one of the most awful openings, of the fall and universal corruption of man, that is to be found in Holy Writ. He afterwards cuts up the doctrine of legal works and human merit, and establishes the doctrine of free and sovereign justification by faith—(if I might be allowed the use of the phrase)—the PALADIUM OF CHRISTIANITY.

In the 6th chapter, to shield a glorious truth from the abuse of FALSE professors, he cuts down licentious practice. In the 7th, he unveils the Christian's inward conflict. In the 8th, we have a golden chain of doctrine,—experience, practice, and privileges. In the 9th, he states and defends election, predestination, and the sovereignty of God.

In the 10th, he comes down to the lowest evidences of the divine life. In the 11th, the breaking off of the Jews, and the grafting in of the Gentiles. In the 12th, powerful exhortations to Christian obedience, well becoming an Apostle of Jesus Christ. 13th, He enforces obedience to

the civil rulers and magistrates. 14th, Asserts the first claims of the weak upon the strong in faith. 15th, Sets down the TRUE Shibboleth, as a test of suitability to enter the visible Church, in the 7th verse, and glories in that power of Christ which had attended his own ministry; and concludes the epistle with greetings and salutations, which show how love reigned in the hearts of Christians in those days.

Interrupted for about seven hours, I think I must have tired you with this singular running glance at part of the Scriptures.

Things at Gower-street are much as when I wrote last. For myself, I have to complain of my state of mind, except when in the gears; I am then OFTEN FAVOURED. I now and then meet with a little encouragement, but with much that might well humble me. . . .

We hear of little else, save divisions, wars, and rumours of wars. I should wonder if God has not a CONTROVERSY with some of us, seeing we have, alas! so many divisions, factions, and controversies, amongst OURSELVES.

ED. BLACKSTOCK.

London.

. . . . I WAS this day thinking what a blessed state that man was in, in whom the Lord works POWERFULLY by HIS GRACE, not only granting him the pardon of sin, divine peace, and daily communion with Himself, but also working in him by His Spirit, so as to deliver him from the force of temptation, effectually subduing all kinds of indwelling evils, making and keeping the conscience clean, and in all things ordering his conversation according to the word.

When the Christian fully walks in the ways of wisdom, which are ways of pleasantness, and in her paths, and daily proves them to be paths of peace—happy indeed is that man!

Spiritual consolations are sweet; but I think there is a of mind wherein consolations do not run high, yet

the soul is well and blessedly kept. The Psalmist was in a good state when he could say, "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right ; and I hate every false way," Psalm cxix. 128.

The soul of a Christian is low indeed, when he cannot sincerely and fervently say—

"Order my footsteps by thy word,
And make my soul sincere ;
Let sin have no dominion, Lord,
But keep my conscience clear."

That is a most special branch of salvation, which saves the soul from sin and from sinning ; a soul walking steadily in the fear of God is a great work !—"He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly ; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil ; he shall dwell on high," &c. Isaiah xxxiii. 15, 16. I need not say, this text is a looking-glass for professors—it is a looking-glass for myself. In this I see my soul covered with spots and wrinkles. Christ might well say, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

He lays mighty stress on the practical part, and justly He lays it there. I have much cause to pray for more knowledge, but still greater cause to pray for grace, to enable me to live up to what I do know (which would look much more like sincerity). I once heard a good man preach on the difficulties attending true religion—"Who then can be saved ?" I do not now remember what he said upon the important subject, but after many years of probation, I am deeply convinced that in this imperfect state, **MANY** and **GREAT** are the difficulties in the way of **VITAL** religion. It is like driving a camel through the eye of a needle—with men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. Job says before God, "I know that Thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee."

I need not complain of crosses, rods, frowns, or adversities ; they have all been too few, and too small, to keep

and at the resurrection returns him the whole with large interest. O what a wonder-working God is He! Great and marvellous are thy works and ways, O King of saints!

I desire to be thankful to the Almighty, for enabling me to bring you a little balm and a little honey for all your great kindnesses. I hope I shall never lose sight of the uncommon kindness and attention of yourself and dear Dr. Cheyne.

It is a mercy, that in this unfriendly world there are a few KIND souls still left in it. The Lord increase their number and their means! The great Apostle of the Gentiles says—"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's," Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

Born and brought up in the town of Manchester, there I lived until I was nearly thirty years of age, without a desire to leave my native place. How mysterious are the ways of God! He has brought me as the blind, by a way that I knew not. I have travelled since then many thousands of miles, on foot, on coaches, and in all sorts of vehicles, from a tumbrel to a phaeton. The route by which I and my LARGE family have come, seems almost as strange to me as that of the children of Israel could to them.

From the place of my birth, Jehovah first pitched my tent at Market Drayton, in Shropshire; then at Devizes, Wilts; then, for nearly nine years, at Potton, Bedfordshire; then at Wolverhampton, Staffordshire; then at Lakenheath, Suffolk, for a short time; then at Wolverhampton, a second time; then at Leicester; then at Gower-street, London; then at Watford; and now I suppose I am returned to this place, that my bones may be LAID with those of my DEAR Maria, at Highgate.

Many inconsiderate persons are prejudiced against me because I have had so many places, but God gave me a ROVING COMMISSION. "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."

At times I have been fool enough to envy those preachers who appear as fixtures—I have rebelliously thought my path a very crooked one: but at other seasons I have thought the path excellent—it will be so indeed if it should prove at last the — right way to a city of habitation. A man must go where his work lies.

For a number of years I was favoured to labour with a small degree of acceptance; now I am like an old horse, ready to be turned out or sent to the knackers. The Lord will fulfil all his own counsel, and do his pleasure. Jehovah reigns, and it is for dust and ashes to keep silence before Him.

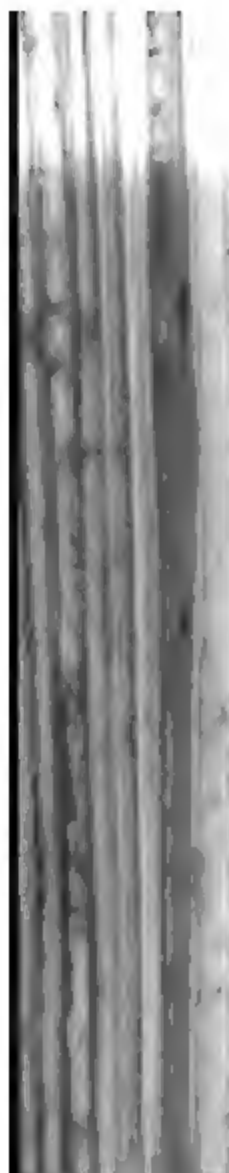
My soul too has passed through many changes. I have been in the pit and on the rock: in bondage, and at liberty: in darkness and in light: at a distance, and near hand: in the internal and infernal conflict, and in peace: in straits, and in the place of broad rivers and streams: in desolations and under revivals—sliding back, and then restored: a helpless captive, and anon like those that dream: within torments, and abounding in plenty: chastened surely, but not given over to death: in the valley, and on the mount. I have passed through the belly of hell through many bells, and have dwelt in the suburbs of heaven—sometimes running, sometimes crawling, and at other times brought to a stand.

I stand now, as on the promontory—life and time seem passing me. I look out upon the vast ocean of eternity: the tired traveller longs for his snug home: the tempest-tossed mariner for his desired haven: the sick man for where the instant shall no more say, I am sick.

Pardon my egotism, and believe me, your affectionate friend.

EDW. BLACKSTOCK







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